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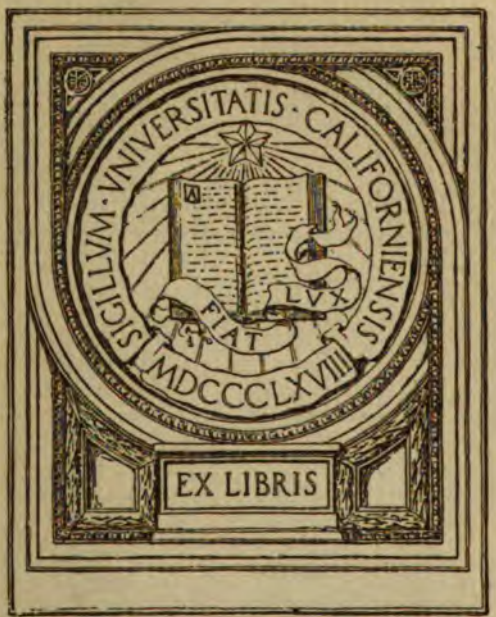

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BY

EDWARD DOWDEN

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I THANK the proprietors and editors of the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Contemporary Review*, the *Nineteenth Century*, and the *Cornhill Magazine* for permitting me to republish several articles in this volume. In the article on "Victorian Literature" I have incorporated a few passages from reviews contributed by me to the *Academy*. I thank Dr Grosart for permitting me to publish the article "Spenser, the Poet and Teacher," which appeared in his privately printed edition of the works of Spenser. I thank Messrs Cassell & Co. for permitting me to republish the article on "Romeo and Juliet," which appeared as an introduction to that play in their *édition de luxe*, illustrated by Mr Frank Dicksee.

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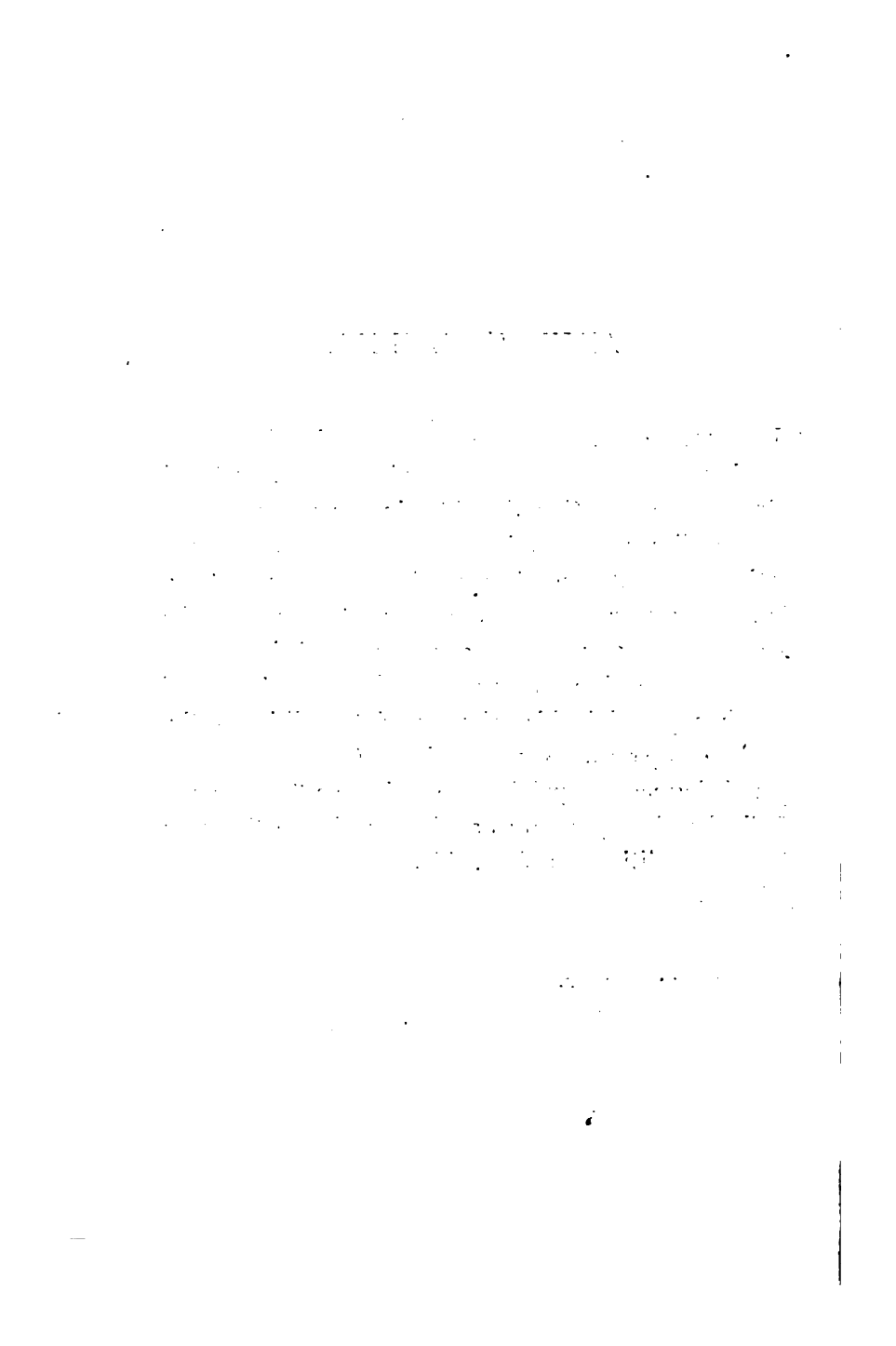

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Carlyle's Lectures on the Periods of European Culture (a Transcript)	1
Shelley's "Philosophical View of Reform" (a Transcript)	41
Last Words on Shelley	75
The Text of Wordsworth's Poems	112
Victorian Literature	153
The Interpretation of Literature	237
Spenser, the Poet and Teacher	269
Heroines of Spenser	305
Shakspere's Portraiture of Women	338
Romeo and Juliet	378
Christopher Marlowe	431
The Idealism of Milton	454
Mr Browning's "Sordello"	474

CARLYLE'S LECTURES ON THE PERIODS OF EUROPEAN CULTURE.

(A TRANSCRIPT.)

"DETESTABLE mixture of prophecy and playactorism" —so in his "Reminiscences" Carlyle describes his work as a lecturer. Yet we are assured by a keen, if friendly, critic, Harriet Martineau, that "the merits of his discourses were so great that he might probably have gone on year after year till this time with improving success and perhaps ease, but the struggle was too severe," *i.e.*, the struggle with nervous excitement and ill-health. In a notice of the first lecture ever delivered (May 1, 1837*) by Carlyle before a London audience, the *Times* observes: "The lecturer, who seems new to the mere technicalities of public speaking, exhibited proofs before he had done of many of its higher and nobler attributes, gathering self-possession as he proceeded."

In the following year a course of twelve lectures was delivered "On the History of Literature, or the successive Periods of European Culture," from Homer to Goethe. As far as I can ascertain, except from short sketches of the two lectures of each week in the *Examiner* from May 6, 1838, onwards, it is now impossible

* The 1st of May was illustrious. On the evening of that day Browning's *Strafford* was produced by Macready at Covent Garden Theatre.

to obtain an account of this series of discourses.* The writer in the *Examiner* (perhaps Leigh Hunt) in noticing the first two lectures (on Greek literature) writes: "He again extemporises, he does not read. We doubted on hearing the Monday's lecture whether he would ever attain in this way to the fluency as well as depth for which he ranks among celebrated talkers in private; but Friday's discourse relieved us. He 'strode away' like Ulysses himself, and had only to regret, in common with his audience, the limits to which the one hour confined him." George Ticknor was present at the ninth lecture of this course, and he noted in his diary (June 1, 1838): "He is a rather small, spare, ugly Scotchman, with a strong accent, which I should think he takes no pains to mitigate. . . . To-day he spoke —as I think he commonly does—without notes, and therefore as nearly extempore as a man can who prepares himself carefully, as was plain he had done. He was impressive, I think, though such lecturing could not well be very popular; and, in some parts, if he were not poetical, he was picturesque." Ticknor estimates the audience at about one hundred.

A manuscript of over two hundred and fifty pages is in my hands, which I take to be a transcript from a report of these lectures by some skilful writer of shorthand. It gives very fully, and I think faithfully, eleven lectures; one, the ninth, is wanting. In the following pages, I may say, nothing, or very little, is my own.

* Dr Chalmers was at this time also lecturing in London, and extensive reports of his lectures are given in the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*.

I have transcribed several of the most striking passages of the lectures, and given a view of the whole, preserving continuity by abstracts of those portions which I do not transcribe. In these abstracts I have as far as possible used the words of the manuscript. In a few instances I have found it convenient to bring together paragraphs on the same subject from different lectures. Some passages which say what Carlyle has said elsewhere I give for the sake of the manner, more direct than that of the printed page; sometimes becoming even colloquial. The reader will do well to imagine these passages delivered with that Northern accent which Carlyle's refined Bostonian hearer thought "he took no pains to mitigate."

At the outset Carlyle disclaims any intention to construct a scientific theory of the history of culture; some plan is necessary in order to approach the subject and become familiar with it, but any proposed theory must be viewed as one of mere convenience.

"There is only one theory which has been most triumphant—that of the planets. On no other subject has any theory succeeded so far yet. Even that is not perfect; the astronomer knows one or two planets, we may say, but he does not know what they are, where they are going, or whether the solar system is not itself drawn into a larger system of the kind. In short, with every theory the man who knows something about it, knows mainly this—that there is much uncertainty in it, great darkness about it, extending down to an infinite deep; in a word, that he does not know what it is. Let him take a stone, for example, the pebble that is under his feet; he knows that it is a stone broken out of rocks old as the creation, but what that pebble is he knows not; he knows nothing at all about that. This system of making a theory about everything is what we may call an enchanted state of mind. That man should be misled, that he should be deprived of knowing the truth that the world is a reality and not a huge confused hypothesis,

that he should be deprived of this by the very faculties given him to understand it, I can call by no other name than Enchantment."

Yet when we look into the scheme of these lectures we perceive a presiding thought, which certainly had more than a provisional value for Carlyle. The history of culture is viewed as a succession of faiths, interrupted by periods of scepticism. The faith of Greece and Rome is succeeded by the Christian faith, with an interval of Pagan scepticism, of which Seneca may be taken as a representative. The Christian faith, earnestly held to men's hearts during a great epoch, is transforming itself into a new thing, not yet capable of definition, proper to our nineteenth century; of this new thing the Goethe of "Wilhelm Meister" and the "West-östlicher Divan" is the herald. But its advent was preceded by that melancholy interval of Christian scepticism, the eighteenth century, represented by Voltaire and the sentimental Goethe of "Werther," which reached its terrible consummation in the French Revolution; and against which stood out in forlorn heroism Samuel Johnson. Carlyle's general view is a broad one, which disregards all but fundamental differences in human beliefs. The Paganism of Greece is not severed from that of Rome; Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, is essentially of one and the same epoch.

"There is a sentence which I find in Goethe full of meaning in this regard. It must be noted, he says, that belief and unbelief are two opposite principles in human nature. The theme of all human history, so far as we are able to perceive it, is the contest between these two principles. All periods, he goes on to say, in which belief predominates, in which it is the main element, the inspiring principle of action, are distinguished by great, soul-stirring, fertile events, and worthy of perpetual remembrance:

and, on the other hand, when unbelief gets the upper hand, that age is unfertile, unproductive, and intrinsically mean; in which there is no pabulum for the spirit of man, and no one can get nourishment for himself. This passage is one of the most pregnant utterances ever delivered, and we shall do well to keep it in mind in these disquisitions."

In attempting "to follow the stream of mind from the period at which the first great spirits of our Western World wrote and flourished down to these times," we start from Greece. When we ask who were the first inhabitants of Greece, we can derive no clear account from any source. "We have no good history of Greece. This is not at all remarkable. Greek transactions never had anything alive [for us?]; no result for us; they were dead entirely. The only points which serve to guide us are a few ruined towns, a few masses of stone, and some broken statuary." Three epochs, however, in Greek history can be traced: the first, that of the siege of Troy—the first confederate act of the Hellenes in their capacity of a European people; the second, that of the Persian invasion; the third, the flower-time of Greece, the period of Alexander the Great, when Greece "exploded itself on Asia."

"Europe was henceforth to develop herself on an independent footing, and it has been so ordered that Greece was to begin that. As to their peculiar physiognomy among nations, they were in one respect an extremely interesting people, but in another unamiable and weak entirely. It has been somewhere remarked by persons learned in the speculation on what is called the doctrine of races, that the Pelasgi were of Celtic descent. However this may be, it is certain that there is a remarkable similarity in character of the French to these Greeks. Their first feature was what we may call the central feature of all others, *exhausting* (*l*)* *vehemence*, not

* MS. "existing."

exactly *strength*, for there was no permanent coherence in it as in strength, but a sort of fiery impetuosity; a vehemence never anywhere so remarkable as among the Greeks, except among the French, and there are instances of this, both in its good and bad point of view. As to the bad, there is the instance mentioned by Thucydides of the sedition in Corcyra, which really does read like a chapter out of the French Revolution, in which the actors seem to be quite regardless of any moment but that which was at hand."

The story of the massacre is briefly told, which recalls to Carlyle, as it did to Niebuhr, the events of September 1792.

"But connected with all this savageness there was an extraordinary delicacy of taste and genius in them. They had a prompt dexterity in seizing the true relations of objects, a beautiful and quick sense in perceiving the places in which the things lay, all round the world, which they had to work with, and this, without being entirely admirable, was in their own internal province highly useful. So the French, with their undeniable bafrenness of genius, have yet in a remarkable manner the facility of expressing themselves with precision and elegance, to so singular a degree that no ideas or inventions can possibly become popularised till they are presented to the world by means of the French language. . . . But in poetry, philosophy, and all things the Greek *genius* displays itself with as curious a felicity as the French does in frivolous exercises. Singing or music was the central principle of the Greeks, not a subordinate one. And they were right. What is not musical is rough and hard and cannot be harmonised. Harmony is the essence of Art and Science. The mind moulds to itself the clay, and makes it what it will."

This spirit of harmony is seen even in the earliest Pelasgic architecture, and more admirably in Greek poetry, Greek temples, Greek statuary. A beautiful example may be found in the story of how Phidias achieved his masterpiece at Elis.

"When he projected his Jupiter of Elis, his ideas were so confused and bewildered as to give him great unrest, and he wandered about perplexed that the shape he wished would not disclose itself.

But one night, after struggling in pain with his thoughts as usual, and meditating on his design, in a dream he saw a group of Grecian maidens approach, with pails of water on their head, who began a song in praise of Jupiter. At that moment the Sun of Poetry stared upon him, and set free the image which he sought for, and it crystallised, as it were, out of his mind into marble, and became as symmetry itself. This Spirit of Harmony operated directly in him, informing all parts of his mind, thence transferring itself into statuary, seen with the eye, and filling the heart of all people."

Having discussed the origin of Polytheism, Carlyle speaks of divination.

"It is really, in my opinion, a blasphemy against human nature to attribute the whole of the system [of polytheism] to quackery and falsehood. Divination, for instance, was the great nucleus round which polytheism formed itself—the constituted core of the whole matter. All people, private men as well as states, used to consult the oracle of Dodona or Delphi (which eventually became the most celebrated of all) on all the concerns of life. Modern travellers have discovered in those places pipes and other secret contrivances from which they have concluded that these oracles were constituted on a principle of falsehood and delusion. Cicero, too, said that he was certain two Augurs could not meet without laughing; and he was likely to know, for he had once been an Augur himself. But I confess that on reading Herodotus there appears to me to have been very little quackery about it. I can quite readily fancy that there was a great deal of reason in the oracle. The seat of that at Dodona was a deep, dark chasm, into which the diviner entered when he sought the Deity. If he was a man of devout frame of mind, he must surely have then been in the best state of feeling for foreseeing the future, and giving advice to others. No matter how this was carried on—by divination or otherwise—so long as the individual suffered himself to be wrapt in union with a higher being. I like to believe better of Greece than that she was completely at the mercy of fraud and falsehood in these matters."

So it was that Pheidippides, the runner, met Pan in the mountain gorge.* "When I consider the frame of

* Carlyle tells the story of Pheidippides evidently from memory, and not quite accurately.

mind he must have been in, I have no doubt that he really heard in his own mind that voice of the God of Nature upon the wild mountain side, and that this was not done by quackery or falsehood at all." But above and around and behind the whole system of polytheism there was a truth discovered by the Greeks—

"that truth which is in every man's heart, and to which no thinking man can refuse his assent. They recognised a destiny! a great, dumb, black power, ruling during time, which knew nobody for its master, and in its decrees was as inflexible as adamant, and every one knew that it was there. It was sometimes called "Moira," or allotment, part, and sometimes "the Unchangeable." Their gods were not always mentioned with reverence. There is a strange document on this point, the Prometheus of Æschylus. Æschylus wrote three plays of Prometheus, but only one has survived. Prometheus had introduced fire into the world, and was punished for that: his design was to make our race a little less wretched than it was. Personally he seems to be a taciturn sort of man, but what he does speak seems like a thunderbolt against Jupiter. . . . Jupiter can hurl him to Tartarus; *his* time is coming too; he must come down; it is all written in the book of 'Destiny.' This curious document really indicates the primeval qualities of man."

Stories from Herodotus, "who was a clear-headed, candid man," of the Scythian nation who shot arrows in the stormy air against their god, and of another people who made war upon the south-wind, similarly illustrate that the ancient reverence for their deities was not the reverence for that which is highest or most powerful in the universe.

From the religion we pass (*Lecture II.*) to the literature of the Greeks. "The 'Iliad' or 'Song of Ilion' consists of a series of what I call ballad delineations of the various occurrences which took place then, rather than a narrative of the event itself. For it begins in

the middle of it, and, I might say, ends in the middle of it." The only argument in favour of Homer being the real author is derived from the common opinion and from the unity of the poem.

"There appears to me to be a great improbability that any one would compose an epic except in writing. . . . I began myself some time ago to read the 'Iliad,' which I had not looked at since I left school, and I must confess that from reading alone I became completely convinced that it was not the work of one man. . . . As to its unity—its value does not consist in an excellent sustaining of characters. There is not at all the sort of style in which Shakespeare draws his characters; there is simply the cunning man, the great-headed, coarse, stupid man, the proud man; but there is nothing so remarkable but that any one else could have drawn the same characters for the purpose of piecing them into the 'Iliad.' We all know the old Italian comedy, their harlequin, doctor, and columbine. There are almost similar things in the characters in the 'Iliad.'"

In fact the "Iliad" has such unity as the modern collection of our old Robin Hood ballads.

"Contrasting the melodious Greek mind with the not very melodious English mind, the cithara with the fiddle (between which, by the way, there is strong resemblance), and having in remembrance that those of the one class were sung in alehouses, while the other were sung in kings' palaces, it really appears that Robin Hood's ballads have received the very same arrangement as that which in other times produced 'the Tale of Troy divine.'"

The poetry of Homer possesses the highest qualities because it delineates what is ancient and simple, the impressions of a primeval mind. Further,

'Homer does not seem to believe his story to be a fiction; he has no doubt it is a truth. . . . I do not mean to say that Homer could have sworn to the truth of his poems before a jury—far from it; but that he repeated what had survived in tradition and records, and expected his readers to believe them as he did.

With respect to the "machinery," gods and goddesses, Homer was not decorating his poem with pretty fictions. Any remarkable man then might be regarded as supernatural; the experience of the Greeks was narrow, and men's hearts were open to the marvellous.

"Thus Pindar mentions that Neptune appeared on one occasion at the Nemean * games. Here it is conceivable that if some aged individual of venerable mien and few words had in fact come thither, his appearance would have attracted attention; people would have come to gaze upon him, and conjecture have been busy. It would be natural that a succeeding generation should actually report that a god appeared upon the earth."

In addition to these excellences,

"the poem of the 'Iliad' was actually intended to be sung; it sings itself, not only the cadence, but the whole thought of the poem sings itself as it were; there is a serious recitative in the whole matter. . . . With these two qualities, Music and Belief, he places his mind in a most beautiful brotherhood, in a sincere contact with his own characters; there are no reticences; he allows himself to expand with some touching loveliness, and occasionally it may be with an awkwardness that carries its own apology, upon all the matters that come in view of the subject of his work."

In the "Odyssey" there is more of character, more of unity, and it represents a higher state of civilisation. Pallas, who had been a warrior, now becomes the Goddess of Wisdom. Ulysses, in the "Iliad" "an adroit, shifting, cunning man," becomes now "of a tragic significance." He is now "the *much-enduring*, a most endearing of epithets." It is impossible that the "Odyssey" could have been written by many different people.

As to detailed beauties of Homer's poetry, we have a touching instance in Agamemnon's calling not only on

* Isthmian? See Pindar, *Olymp.* viii. 64.

gods but rivers and stars to witness his oath; "he does not say what they *are,* but he feels that he himself is a mysterious existence, standing by the side of them, mysterious existences." Sometimes the simplicity of Homer's similes makes us smile; "but there is great kindness and veneration in the smile." There is a beautiful formula which he uses to describe death:—

"'He thumped down falling, and his arms jingled about him.' Now, trivial as this expression may at first appear, it does convey a deep insight and feeling of that phenomenon. The fall, as it were, of a sack of clay, and the jingle of armour, the last sound he was ever to make throughout time, who a minute or two before was alive and vigorous, and now falls a heavy dead mass. . . . But we must quit Homer. There is one thing, however, which I ought to mention about Ulysses, that he is the very model of the type Greek, a perfect image of the Greek genius; a shifty, nimble, active man, involved in difficulties, but every now and then bobbing up out of darkness and confusion, victorious and intact."

Passing by the early Greek philosophers, whose most valuable contribution to knowledge was in the province of geometry, Carlyle comes to Herodotus.

"His work is, properly speaking, an encyclopædia of the various nations, and it displays in a striking manner the innate spirit of harmony that was in the Greeks. It begins with Crœsus, King of Lydia; upon some hint or other it suddenly goes off into a digression on the Persians, and then, apropos of something else, we have a disquisition on the Egyptians, and so on. At first we feel somewhat impatient of being thus carried away at the sweet will of the author; but we soon find it to be the result of an instinctive spirit of harmony, and we see all these various branches of the tale come pouring down at last in the invasion of Greece by the Persians. It is that spirit of order which has constituted him the prose poet of his country. . . . It is mainly through him that we become acquainted with Themistocles, that model of the type Greek in prose, as Ulysses was in song. . . .

"Contemporary with Themistocles, and a little prior to Herodotus, Greek tragedy began. Æschylus I define to have been a

truly gigantic man—one of the largest characters ever known, and all whose movements are clumsy and huge like those of a son of Anak. In short, his character is just that of Prometheus himself as he has described him. I know no more pleasant thing than to study Æschylus; you fancy you hear the old dumb rocks speaking to you of all things they had been thinking of since the world began, in their wild, savage utterances."

Sophocles translated the drama into a choral peal of melody. "The 'Antigone' is the finest thing of the kind ever sketched by man." Euripides writes for effect's sake, "but how touching is the effect produced!"

Socrates, as viewed by Carlyle, is "the emblem of the decline of the Greeks," when literature was becoming speculative.

"I willingly admit that he was a man of deep feeling and morality; but I can well understand the idea which Aristophanes had of him, that he was a man going to destroy all Greece with his innovation. . . . He shows a lingering kind of awe and attachment for the old religion of his country, and often we cannot make out whether he believed in it or not. He must have had but a painful intellectual life, a painful kind of life altogether one would think. . . . He devoted himself to the teaching of morality and virtue, and he spent his life in that kind of mission. I cannot say that there was any evil in this; but it does seem to me to have been of a character entirely unprofitable. I have a great desire to admire Socrates, but I confess that his writings seem to be made up of a number of very wire-drawn notions about virtue; there is no conclusion in him; there is no word of life in Socrates. He was, however, personally a coherent and firm man.

We pass now (*Lecture III.*) to the Romans.

"We may say of this nation that as the Greeks may be compared to the *children* of antiquity from their *naïveté* and gracefulness, while their whole history is an aurora, the dawn of a higher culture and civilisation, so the Romans were the *men* of antiquity, and their history a glorious, warm, laborious day, less beautiful and graceful no doubt than the Greeks, but more essentially useful. . . . The Greek life was shattered to pieces against the harder,

stronger life of the Romans. . . . It was just as a beautiful crystal jar becomes dashed to pieces upon the hard rocks, so inexpressible was the force of the strong Roman energy." *

The Romans show the characters of two distinct species of people—the Pelasgi and the Etruscans. The old Etruscans, besides possessing a certain genius for art, were an agricultural people—

"endowed with a sort of sullen energy, and with a spirit of intensely industrious thrift, a kind of vigorous thrift. Thus with respect to the ploughing of the earth they declare it to be a kind of blasphemy against nature to leave a clod unbroken. . . . Now this feeling was the fundamental characteristic of the Roman people before they were distinguished as conquerors. Thrift is a quality held in no esteem, and is generally regarded as mean; it is certainly mean enough, and objectionable from its interfering with all manner of intercourse between man and man. But I can say that thrift well understood includes in itself the best virtues that a man can have in the world; it teaches him self-denial, to postpone the present to the future, to calculate his means, and regulate his actions accordingly; thus understood, it includes all that man can do in his vocation. Even in its worst state it indicates a great people." †

Joined with this thrift there was in the Romans a great seriousness and devoutness; and they made the Pagan notion of fate much more productive of consequences than the Greeks did, by their conviction that Rome was fated to rule the world. And it was good for the world to be ruled sternly and strenuously by Rome; it is the true liberty to obey.

"That stubborn grinding down of the globe which their ancestors practised, ploughing the ground fifteen times to make it pro-

* Here Carlyle speaks of Niebuhr, whose book "is altogether a laborious thing, but he affords after all very little light on the early period of Roman history."

† See, to the same effect, "a certain editor" in "Frederick the Great," b. iv., ch. 4.

duce a better crop than if it were ploughed fourteen times, the same was afterwards carried out by the Romans in all the concerns of their ordinary life, and by it they raised themselves above all other people. Method was their principle just as harmony was of the Greeks. The method of the Romans was a sort of harmony, but not that beautiful graceful thing which was the Greek harmony. Theirs was a harmony of plans, an architectural harmony, which was displayed in the arranging of practical antecedents and consequences."

The "crowning phenomenon" of their history was the struggle with Carthage. The Carthaginians were like the Jews, a stiff-necked people; a people proverbial for injustice.

"I most sincerely rejoice that they did not subdue the Romans, but that the Romans got the better of them. We have indications which show that they were a mean people compared to the Romans, who thought of nothing but commerce, would do anything for money, and were exceedingly cruel in their measures of aggrandisement and in all their measures. . . . How the Romans got on after that we can see by the Commentaries which Julius Cæsar has left us of his own proceedings; how he spent ten years of campaigns in Gaul, cautiously planning all his measures before he attempted to carry them into effect. It is, indeed, a most interesting book, and evinces the indomitable force of Roman energy; the triumph of civil, methodic man over wild and barbarous man."

Before Cæsar the government of Rome seems to have been

"a very tumultuous kind of polity, a continual struggle between the Patricians and the Plebeians. . . . Therefore I cannot join in the lamentations made by some over the downfall of the Republic, when Cæsar took hold of it. It had been but a constant struggling scramble for prey, and it was well to end it, and to see the wisest, cleanest, and most judicious man of them place himself at the top of it. . . . And what an Empire was it! Teaching mankind that they should be tilling the ground, as they ought to be, instead of fighting one another. For that is the real thing which every man is called on to do—to till the ground, and not to slay his poor brother-man."

Coming now to their language and literature—the peculiarly distinguishing character of the language is "its imperative sound and structure, finely adapted to command." Their greatest work was written on the face of the planet in which we live; and all their great works were done spontaneously through a deep instinct.

"The point is not to be able to write a book; the point is to have *the true mind for it.* Everything in that case which a nation does will be equally significant of its mind. If any great man among the Romans, Julius Cæsar or Cato for example, had never done anything but till the ground, they would have acquired equal excellence in that way. They would have ploughed as they conquered. Everything a great man does carries the traces of a great man."

Virgil's "Æneid"

"ranks as an epic poem, and one, too, of the same sort in name as the 'Iliad' of Homer. But I think it entirely a different poem, and very inferior to Homer. There is that fatal consciousness, that knowledge that he is writing an epic. The plot, the style, all is vitiated by that one fault. The characters, too, are none of them to be compared to the healthy, whole-hearted, robust men of Homer, the much-enduring Ulysses, or Achilles, or Agamemnon. Æneas, the hero of the poem, is a lachrymose sort of man altogether. He is introduced in the middle of a storm, but instead of handling the tackle and doing what he can for the ship, he sits still, groaning over his misfortunes. 'Was ever mortal,' he asks, 'so unfortunate as I am? Chased from port to port by the persecuting deities, who give me no respite,' and so on; and then he tells them how he is 'the pious Æneas.' In short, he is just that sort of lachrymose man! there is hardly anything of a man in the inside of him."

"When he let himself alone," Virgil was a great poet, admirable in his description of natural scenery, and in his women; an amiable man of mild deportment, called by the people of Naples "the maid." "The effect of his poetry is like that of some laborious mosaic of many

years in putting together. There is also the Roman method, the Roman amplitude and regularity." His friend Horace is "sometimes not at all edifying in his sentiments;" too Epicurean; "He displays a worldly kind of sagacity, but it is a great sagacity." After these, Roman literature quickly degenerated.

"If we want an example of a diseased self-consciousness and exaggerated imagination, a mind blown up with all sorts of strange conceits, the spasmodic state of intellect, in short, of a man morally unable to speak the truth on any subject—we have it in Seneca. . . . . I willingly admit that he had a strong desire to be sincere, and that he endeavoured to convince himself that he was right, but even this when in connection with the rest constitutes of itself a fault of a dangerous kind."

But—such is the power of genius to make itself heard at all times—the most significant and the greatest of Roman writers appeared later than Seneca.

"In the middle of all that quackery and puffery coming into play turn-about in every department, when critics wrote books to teach you how to hold your arm and your leg, in the middle of all this absurd and wicked period Tacitus was born, and was enabled to be a Roman after all. He stood like a Colossus at the edge of a dark night, and he sees events of all kinds hurrying past him, and plunging he knew not where, but evidently to no good, for falsehood and cowardice never yet ended anywhere but in destruction."

Yet he writes with grave calmness, he does not seem startled, he is convinced that it will end well somehow or other, "for he has no belief but the old Roman belief, full of their old feelings of goodness and honesty." Carlyle closes his view of pagan literature with that passage in which Tacitus speaks of the origin of the sect called Christians.

"It was given to Tacitus to see deeper into the matter than appears from the above account of it. But he and the great Empire

were soon to pass away for ever; and it was this despised sect—this *Christus quidam*—it was in this new character that all the future world lay hid."

The transition period (*Lecture IV.*), styled "the millennium of darkness," was really a great and fertile period, during which belief was conquering unbelief; conquering it not by force of argument but through the heart, and "by the conviction of men who spoke into convincible minds." Belief—that is the great fact of the time. The last belief left by Paganism is seen in the Stoic philosophers—belief in oneself, belief in the high, royal nature of man. But in their opinions a great truth is extremely exaggerated:—

"That bold assertion for example, in the face of all reason and fact, that pain and pleasure are the same thing, that man is indifferent to both. . . . If we look into the Christian religion, that dignification of man's life and nature, we shall find indeed this also in it,—to believe in oneself. . . . But then how unspeakably more human is *this* belief, not held in proud scorn and contempt of other men, in cynical disdain or indignation at their paltriness, but received by exterminating pride altogether from the mind, and held in degradation and deep human sufferings."

Christianity reveals the divinity of human sorrow.

"In another point of view we may regard it as the revelation of Eternity: Every man may with truth say that he waited for a whole eternity to be born, and that he has a whole Eternity waiting to see what he will do now that he is born. It is this which gives to this little period of life, so contemptible when weighed against eternity, a significance it never had without it. It is thus an infinite arena, where infinite issues are played out. Not an action of man but will have its truth realised and will go on for ever. . . . This truth, whatever may be the opinions we hold on Christian doctrine, or whether we hold upon them a sacred silence or not, we must recognise in Christianity and its belief independent of all theories."

If to the character of the new faith we add the

character of the Northern people, we have the two leading phenomena of the Middle Ages. With much shrewdness, the still rude societies of Europe find their way to order and quiet. Then, there was that thing which we call *loyalty*. In these times of our own

"loyalty is much kept out of sight, and little appreciated, and many minds regard it as a sort of obsolete chimera, looking more to independence and some such thing, now regarded as a great virtue. And this is very just, and most suitable to this time of movement and progress. It must be granted at once that to exact loyalty to things so bad as to be not worth being loyal to is quite an unsupportable thing, and one that the world would spurn at once. This must be conceded; yet the better thinkers will see that loyalty is a principle perennial in human nature, the highest that unfolds itself there in a temporal, secular point of view. In the Middle Ages it was the noblest phenomenon, the finest phasis in society anywhere. Loyalty was the foundation of the State."

Another cardinal point was the Church. "Like all other matters, there were contradictions and inconsistencies without end, but it should be regarded in its Ideal." Hildebrand represents the Mediæval Church at its highest power. "He has been regarded by some classes of Protestants as the wickedest of men, but I do hope we have at this time outgrown all that. He perceived that the Church was the highest thing in the world, and he resolved that it should be at the top of the whole world, animating human things, and giving them their main guidance." Having described the humiliation of the Emperor Henry the Fourth at the Castle of Canossa, Carlyle proceeds:—

"One would think from all this that Hildebrand was a proud man, but he was not a proud man at all, and seems from many circumstances to have been on the contrary a man of very great humility; but here he treated himself as the representative of Christ, and far

beyond all earthly authorities. In these circumstances doubtless there are many questionable things, but then there are many cheering things. For we see the son of a poor Tuscan peasant, solely by the superior spiritual love that was in him, humble a great emperor, at the head of the iron force of Europe, and, to look at it in a tolerant point of view, it is really very grand; it is the spirit of Europe set above the body of Europe; the mind triumphant over the brute force. . . . Some have feared that the tendency of such things is to found a theocracy, and have imagined that if this had gone on till our days a most abject superstition would have become established; but this is entirely a vain theory. The clay that is about man is always sufficiently ready to assert its rights; the danger is always the other way, that the spiritual part of man will become overlaid with his bodily part. This then was the Church, which with the loyalty of the time were the two hinges of society, and that society was in consequence distinguished from all societies which have preceded it, presenting an infinitely greater diversity of views, a better humanity, a largeness of capacity. This society has since undergone many changes, but I hope that *that* spirit may go on for countless ages, the spirit which at that period was set going."

The grand apex of that life was the Crusades.

"One sees Peter [the Hermit] riding along, dressed in his brown cloak, with the rope of the penitent tied round him, carrying all hearts, and burning them up with zeal, and stirring up steel-clad Europe till it shook itself at the words of Peter. What a contrast to the greatest of orators, Demosthenes, spending nights and years in the construction of those balanced sentences which are still read with admiration, descending into the smallest details, speaking with pebbles in his mouth and the waves of the sea beside him, and all his way of life in this manner occupied during many years, and then to end in simply nothing at all; for he did nothing for his country, with all his eloquence. And then see this poor monk start here without any art; for as Demosthenes was once asked what was the secret of a fine orator, and he replied Action, Action, Action, so, if I were asked it, I should say Belief, Belief, Belief. . . . Some have admired the Crusades because they served to bring all Europe into communication with itself, others because it produced the elevation of the middle classes; but I say that the great result which characterises and gives them all their merits, is that in

them Europe for one moment proved its belief, proved that it believed in the invisible world, which surrounds the outward and visible world, that this belief had for once entered into the consciousness of man."

It was not an age for literature. The noble made his signature by dipping the mail-gloved hand into the ink and imprinting it on the charter. But heroic lives were lived, if heroic poems were not written; an ideal did exist; the heroic heart was not then desolate and alone; the great result of the time was "a perpetual struggling forward." And a literature did come at last; beautiful childlike utterances of troubadour and trouvère; lasting, however, but a little while, in consequence of the rise of a kind of feeling adverse to the spirit of harmony. Petrarch, the troubadour of Italy, and the Nibelungenlied represent the period. The spirit of the age did not speak much, but it was not lost. "It is not so ordered." When we hear rude, natural voices singing in the distance, all is true and bright, because all false notes destroy one another, and are absorbed in the air before they reach us, and only the true notes come to us. So in the Middle Ages we only get the heroic essence of the whole.

Of the new-formed nations the Italian "first possesses a claim on our solicitude." (*Lecture V.*)* Though Italy was not a great political power, she produced a greater number of great men distinguished in art, thinking, and conduct than any other country—and to produce great men is the highest thing any land can do.

* I make few excerpts from this lecture, for a good part of its substance appears in the lecture "The Hero as Poet," in "Heroes and Hero-worship."

The spokesman of Italy in literature is Dante—one who stands beside Æschylus and Shakspere, and "we really cannot add another great name to these." The idea of his "Divina Commedia," with its three kingdoms of eternity, is "the greatest idea that we have ever got at." "I think that when all records of Catholicism have passed away, when the Vatican shall be crumbled into dust, and St Peter's and Strasburg minster be no more, for thousands of years to come Catholicism will survive in this sublime relic of antiquity." Dante is great in his wrath, his scorn, his pity; great above all in his sorrow. His greatness of heart, united with his greatness of intellect, determine his character; and his poem sings itself, has both insight and song. Dante does not seem to know that he is doing anything very remarkable, differing herein from Milton.

"In all his delineations he has a most beautiful, sharp grace, the quickest and clearest intellect; it is just that honesty with which his mind was set upon his subject that carries it out. . . . Take for example his description of the city of Dis to which Virgil carries him; it possesses a beautiful simplicity and honesty. The light was so dim that people could hardly see, and they winked at him, just as people wink with their eyes under the new moon, or as an old tailor winks threading his needle when his eyes are not good."

The passage about Francesca is as "tender as the voice of mothers, full of the gentlest pity, though there is much stern tragedy in it. . . . The whole is beautiful, like a clear piping voice heard in the middle of a whirlwind; it is so sweet, and gentle, and good." The "Divine Comedy" is not a satire on Dante's enemies.

"It was written in the pure spirit of justice. Thus he pitied poor Francesca, and would not have willingly placed her in that torment,

but it was the justice of God's law that doomed her there. . . . Sudden and abrupt movements are frequent in Dante. He is indeed full of what I can call military movements. . . . Those passages are very striking where he alludes to his own sad fortunes; there is in them a wild sorrow, a savage tone of truth, a breaking heart, the hatred of Florence, and with it the love of Florence. . . . His old schoolmaster tells him 'If thou follow thy star thou canst not miss a happy harbour.' That was just it. That star occasionally shone on him from the blue, eternal depths, and he felt he was doing something good; he soon lost it again; lost it again as he fell back into the trough of the sea. . . . Bitter! bitter! poor exile,—none but scoundrelly persons to associate with. . . . The "Inferno" has become of late times mainly the favourite of the three [parts of the poem]; it has harmonised well with the taste of the last thirty or forty years, in which Europe has seemed to covet more a violence of emotion and a strength of convulsion than almost any other quality. . . . but I question whether the "Purgatorio" is not better, and a greater thing. . . . Men have of course ceased to believe these things, that there is the mountain rising up in the ocean there, or that there are those Malebolgic black gulphs; but still men of any knowledge at all must believe that there exists the inexorable justice of God, and that penitence is a great thing here for man; for life is but a series of errors made good again by repentance, and the sacredness of that doctrine is asserted in Dante in a manner more moral than anywhere else. . . . One can well understand what the Germans say of the three parts of the "Divina Commedia," viz., that the first is the architectural, plastic part, as of statuary; the second is the pictorial or picturesque; the third is the musical, the melting into music, song."

Lecture VI.—Dante's way of thinking, in the nature of things, could not long continue. With an increased horizon of knowledge, his theory could no longer fit. "All theories approximate more or less to the great theory which remains itself always unknown. . . . Every philosophy that exists is destined to be embraced, melted down as it were into some larger philosophy." Universities, the art of printing, gunpowder, were changing the aspects of human life during the two centuries

that lie between Dante and Cervantes. Loyalty and the Catholic religion, as we saw, gave their character to the Middle Ages. Chivalry, the great product of the Spanish nation, is a practical illustration of loyalty; and chivalry includes, with the German valour of character, another German feature, the reverence for women. The Spanish nation was fitted to carry chivalry to a higher perfection than it attained anywhere else.

"The Spaniards had less breadth of genius than the Italians; but they had, on the other hand, a lofty, sustained enthusiasm in a higher degree than the Italians, with a tinge of what we call romance, a dash of oriental exaggeration, and a tenacious vigour in prosecuting their object; of less depth than the Germans, of less of that composed silent force; yet a great people, calculated to be distinguished."

Its early heroes, Viriathus and the Cid (whose memory is still musical among the people), lived silent; their works spoke for them. The first great Spanish name in literature is that of Cervantes. His life—that of a man of action—is told by Carlyle in his brief, picturesque manner. "Don Quixote" is the very reverse of Dante, yet has analogies with Dante. It was begun as a satire on chivalry, a burlesque; but as Cervantes proceeds, the spirit grows on him.

"In his 'Don Quixote' he portrays his own character, representing himself, with good natural irony, mistaking the illusions of his own heart for realities. But he proceeds ever more and more harmoniously. . . . Above all, we see the good-humoured cheerfulness of the author in the middle of his unfortunate destiny; never provoked with it; no atrabiliar quality ever obtained any mastery in his mind. . . . Independently of chivalry, "Don Quixote" is valuable as a sort of sketch of the perpetual struggle in the human soul. We have the hard facts of this world's existence, and the ideal scheme struggling with these in a high

enthusiastic manner delineated there; and for this there is no more wholesome vehicle anywhere than irony. . . . If he had given us only a high-flown panegyric on the Age of Gold,* he would have found no ear for him; it is the self-mockery in which he envelops it which reconciles us to the high bursts of enthusiasm, and will keep the matter alive in the heart as long as there are men to read it. It is the Poetry of Comedy."

Cervantes possessed in an eminent degree the thing critics call *humour*.

"If any one wish to know the difference between humour and wit, the laughter of the fool, which the wise man, by a similitude founded on deep earnestness, calls the crackling of thorns under a pot, let him read Cervantes on the one hand, and on the other Voltaire, the greatest laugher the world ever knew."

Of Calderon, Carlyle has not read much, "in fact only one play and some choice specimens collected in German books," and in the German admiration for Calderon he suspects there is "very much of forced taste." Lope was "a man of a strange facility, but of much shallowness too, and greatly inferior to Calderon." In the history of Spanish literature there are only these two beside Cervantes. Why Spain declined cannot be explained: "we can only say just this, that its time was come." The lecture closes with a glance at "that conflict of Catholicism and Chivalry with the Reformation commonly called the Dutch War."

Lecture VII.—The Reformation places us upon German soil. The German character had a deep earnestness in it, proper to a meditative people. The strange fierceness known as the Berserkir rage is also theirs.

* Carlyle had previously made particular reference to the scene with the goat-herds.

"Rage of that sort, defying all dangers and obstacles, if kept down sufficiently, is as a central fire which will make all things to grow on the surface above it. . . . On the whole, it is the best character that can belong to any nation, producing strength of all sorts, and all the concomitants of strength—perseverance, steadiness, not easily excited, but when it is called up it will have its object accomplished. We find it in all their history. Justice, that is another of its concomitants; strength, one may say, in justice itself. The strong man is he that can be just, that sets everything in its own rightful place one above the other."

Before the Reformation there had been two great appearances of the Germans in European history—the first in the overthrow of the Empire, the second in the enfranchisement of Switzerland. The Reformation was the inevitable result of human progress, the old theory no longer being found to fit the facts. And "when the mind begins to be dubious about a creed, it will rush with double fury towards destruction; for all serious men hate dubiety."

In the sixteenth century there was no Pope Hildebrand ready to sacrifice life itself to the end that he might make the Church the highest thing in the world. The Popes did indeed maintain the Church, "but they just believed nothing at all, or believed that they got so many thousand crowns a year by it. The whole was one chimera, one miserable sham." Any one inclined to see things in their proper light "would have decided that it was better to have nothing to do with it, but crouch down in an obscure corner somewhere, and read his Bible, and get what good he can for himself in that way, but have nothing to do with the Machiavellian policy of such a Church."

At such a time Luther appeared, Luther "whose life

was not to sink into a downy sleep while he heard the great call of a far other life upon him."* His character presents whatever is best in German minds.

"He is the image of a large, substantial, deep man, that stands upon truth, justice, fairness, that fears nothing, considers the right and calculates on nothing else; and again, does not do it spasmodically, but quietly, calmly; no need of any noise about it; adheres to it deliberately, calmly, through good and bad report. Accordingly we find him a good-humoured, jovial, witty man, greatly beloved by every one, and though his words were half battles, as Jean Paul says, stronger than artillery, yet among his friends he was one of the kindest of men. The wild kind of force that was in him appears in the physiognomy of the portrait by Luke Cranach, his painter and friend; the rough plebeian countenance with all sorts of noble thoughts shining out through it. That was precisely Luther as he appears through his whole history."

Erasmus admitted the necessity of some kind of reformation:—

"But that he should risk his ease and comfort for it did not enter into his calculations at all. . . . I should say, to make my friends understand the character of Erasmus, that he is more like Addison than any other writer who is familiarly known in this country. . . . He was a man certainly of great merit, nor have I much to say against him . . . but he is not to be named by the side of Luther,—a mere writer of poems, a *littérateur*."

There is a third striking German character whom we must notice, Ulrich Hutten—a struggler all his days:

"much too headlong a man. He so hated injustice that he did not know how to deal with it, and he became heart-broken by it at last. . . . He says of himself he hated tumult of all kinds, and it was a painful and sad position for him that wished to obey orders, while a still higher order commanded him to disobey, when the standing by that order would be in fact the standing by disorder."

* Much of what Carlyle says here of Luther reappears in "Heroes and Hero-worship."

His lifting his cap, when at the point of death, because he had reverence for what was above him, to the Archbishop who had caused his destruction, "seems to me the noblest, politest thing that is recorded of any such a moment as that." And the worst thing one reads of Erasmus is his desertion of Hutten in his day of misfortune.

The English nation (*Lecture VIII.*) first comes into decisive notice about the time of the Reformation. In the English character there is "a kind of silent ruggedness of nature, with the wild Berserkir rage deeper down in the Saxon than in the others." English talent is practical like that of the Romans, a greatness of perseverance, adherence to a purpose, method; practical greatness, in short. In the early history, before Alfred, "we read of battles and successions of kings, and one endeavours to remember them, but without success, except so much of this flocking and fighting as Milton gives us, viz., that they were the battles of the kites and crows." Yet the history of England was then in the making. "Whoever was uprooting a thistle or bramble, or drawing out a bog, or building himself a house, or in short leaving a single section of order where he had found disorder, that man was writing the History of England, the others were only obstructing it." The battles themselves were a means of ascertaining who among them should rule—who had most force and method among them. A wild kind of intellect as well as courage and traces of deep feeling are scattered over their history. There was an affirmativeness, a largeness of soul, in the intervals of these fights of kites and crows, as the doings of King Alfred show us.

About the time of Queen Elizabeth the confused elements amalgamated into some distinct vital unity. That period was "in many respects the summation of innumerable influences, the co-ordination of many things which till then had been in contest, the first beautiful outflush of energy, the first articulate, spoken energy." After centuries the blossom of poetry appeared for once. Shakspere is the epitome of the age of Elizabeth; he is the spokesman of our nation; like Homer, Æschylus, and Dante, a voice of the innermost heart of nature; a universal man.* His intellect was far greater than that of any other that has given an account of himself by writing books. "There is no tone of feeling that is not capable of yielding melodious resonance to that of Shakspere." In him lay "the great, stern Berserkir rage burning deep down under all, and making all to grow out in the most flourishing way, doing ample justice to all feelings, not developing any one in particular." What he writes is properly *nature*, "the instinctive behest of his mind. This all-producing earth knows not the symmetry of the oak which springs from it. It is all beautiful, not a branch is out of its place, all is symmetry: but the Earth has itself no conception of it, and produced it solely by the virtue that was in itself." Shakspere has a beautiful sympathy of brotherhood with his subject, but he seems to have no notion at all of the great and deep things in him. Certain magniloquent passages he seems to have imagined extraordinarily great, but in general there is perfect sincerity in any matter he under-

* Many things said of Shakspere and of Knox in this lecture are repeated in "Heroes and Hero-worship."

takes. It was by accident that he was roused to be a poet, "for the greatest man is always a quiet man by nature. We are sure not to find greatness in a prurient, noisy man."

We turn from Shakspere to a very different man—John Knox.

"Luther would have been a great man in other things beside the Reformation, a great substantial happy man, who must have excelled in whatever matter he undertook. Knox had not that faculty, but simply this of standing upon truth entirely; it isn't that his sincerity is known to him to be sincerity, but it arises from a sense of the impossibility of any other procedure. . . . Sincerity, what is it but a divorce from earth and earthly feelings? The sun which shines upon the earth, and seems to touch it, doesn't touch the earth at all. So the man who is free of earth is the only one that can maintain the great truths of existence, not by an ill-natured talking for ever about truth, but it is he who does the truth. There is a great deal of humour in Knox, as bright a humour as in Chaucer, expressed in his own quaint Scotch. . . . . Thus when he describes the two archbishops quarrelling, no doubt he was delighted to see the disgrace it brought on the Church, but he was chiefly excited by the really ludicrous spectacle of rochets flying about, and vestments torn, and the struggle each made to overturn the other."

Milton may be considered "as a summing up, composed as it were of the two, Shakspere and Knox."* Shakspere having reverence for everything that bears the mark of the Deity, may well be called religious, but he is of no particular sect. Milton is altogether sectarian. As a poet "he was not one of those who reach into actual contact with the deep fountain of greatness;" his "Paradise Lost" does not come out of the heart of things; it seems rather to have been welded together.

* So Taine, in his more abstract way, says that Milton sums up the Renaissance and the Reformation.

"There is no life in his characters. Adam and Eve are beautiful, graceful objects, but no one has breathed the Pygmalion life into them; they remain cold statues. Milton's sympathies were with things rather than men; the scenery and phenomena of nature, the gardens, the trim gardens, the burning lake; but as for the phenomena of mind, he was not able to see them. He has no delineation of mind except Satan, of which we may say that Satan has his own character."

[*Lecture IX.* is wanting in the manuscript. The following points from the notice in the *Examiner* may serve to preserve continuity in the present sketch. The French as a nation "go together," as the Italians do not; but it is physical and animal going together, not that of any steady, final purpose. Voltaire, full of wit and extraordinary talents, but nothing final in him. All modern scepticism is mere contradiction, discovering no new truth. Voltaire kind-hearted and "beneficent," however. French genius has produced nothing original. Montaigne, an honest sceptic. Excessive unction of Rabelais' humour. Rousseau's world-influencing egotism. Bayle, a dull writer.]

Lecture X.—The French, as we have seen, sowed nothing in the seedfield of time; Voltaire, on the contrary, casting firebrands among the dry leaves, produced the combustion we shall notice by-and-bye. No province of knowledge was cultivated except in an unfruitful, desert way. Thus politics summed themselves up in the "Contrat Social" of Rousseau. The only use intellect was put to was to ask why things were there, and to account for it and argue about it. So it was all over Europe in the eighteenth century. The quack was established, and the only belief held was "that money will buy money's worth, and that pleasure is

pleasant." In England this baneful spirit was not so deep as in France: partly because the Teutonic nature is slower, deeper than the French; partly because England was a free Protestant country. Still it was an age of logic, not of faith; an age of talk, striving to prove faith and morality by speech; unaware that logic never proved any truths but those of mathematics, and that all great things are silent things. "In spite of early training I never do see sorites of logic hanging together, put in regular order, but I conclude that it is going to end in some measure in some miserable delusion."

However imperfect the literature of England was at this period, its spirit was never greater; it did great things, it built great towns, Birmingham and Liverpool, cyclopean workshops, and ships. There was sincerity there at least, Arkwright and Watt were evidently sincere. Another symptom of the earnestness of the period was that thing we call Methodism. The fire in Whitfield—fire, not logic—was unequalled since Peter the Hermit.

As to literature, "in Queen Anne's time, after that most disgraceful class of people—King Charles's people—had passed away, there appeared the milder kind of unbelief, complete formalism. Yet there were many beautiful indications of better things." "Addison was a mere lay preacher completely bound up in formalism, but he did get to say many a true thing in his generation." Steele had infinitely more *naïveté*, but he subordinated himself to Addison.

"It is a cold vote in Addison's favour that one gives. By far the greatest man of that time, I think, was Jonathan Swift, Dean

Swift, a man entirely deprived of his natural nourishment, but of great robustness, of genuine Saxon mind, not without a feeling of reverence, though from circumstances it did not awaken in him. . . . He saw himself in a world of confusion and falsehood; no eyes were clearer to see it than his."

Being of acrid temperament, he took up what was fittest for him, "sarcasm mainly, and he carried it quite to an epic pitch. There is something great and fearful in his irony"—which yet shows sometimes sympathy and a kind of love for the thing he satirises. By nature he was one of the truest of men, with great pity for his fellow-men. In Sterne

"there was a great quantity of good struggling through the superficial evil. He terribly failed in the discharge of his duties, still we must admire in him that sporting kind of geniality and affection, a son of our common mother, not cased up in buckram formulas. . . . We cannot help feeling his immense love for things around him, so that we may say of him as of Magdalen, 'Much is forgiven him because he much loved.'"

As for Pope,

"he was one of the finest heads ever known, full of deep sayings, and uttering them in the shape of couplets, rhymed couplets."*

The two persons who exercised the most remarkable influence upon things during the eighteenth century were unquestionably Samuel Johnson† and David Hume, "two summits of a great set of influences, two opposite poles of it. . . . There is not such a cheering spectacle in the eighteenth century as Samuel Johnson." He contrived to be devout in it; he had a belief and held by it, a genuine inspired man. Hume's eye, unlike

* It is interesting to compare Thackeray's estimates of Swift and Sterne with Carlyle's.

† The criticism on Johnson, being to the same effect as that of Carlyle's essay, I pass over.

Johnson's, was not open to faith, yet he was of a noble perseverance, a silent strength.'

"The 'History of England' failed to get buyers; he bore it all like a Stoic, like a heroic silent man as he was, and then proceeded calmer to the next thing he had to do. I have heard old people, who have remembered Hume well, speak of his great good humour under trials, the quiet strength of it; the very converse in this of Dr Johnson, whose coarseness was equally strong with his heroisms."

As an historian, Hume "always knows where to begin and end. In his History he frequently rises, though a cold man naturally, into a kind of epic height as he proceeds." His scepticism went to the very end, so that "all could see what was in it, and give up the unprofitable employment of spinning cobwebs in their brain." His fellow-historian, Robertson, was a shallow man, with only a power of arrangement, and a "soft, sleek style." Gibbon, a far greater historian than Robertson, was not so great as Hume. "With all his swagger and bombast, no man ever gave a more futile account of human things than he has done in the 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.'"

Lecture XI.—It is very strange to contrast Hume, the greatest of all the writers of his time, and in some respects the worthiest, with Dante; to contrast scepticism with faith. "Dante saw a solemn law in the universe pointing out his destiny with an awful and beautiful certainty, and he held to it. Hume could see nothing in the universe but confusion, and he was certain of nothing but his own existence. Yet he had instincts which were infinitely more true than the logical part of him, and so he kept himself quiet in the middle of it

all, and did no harm to any one." But scepticism is a disease of the mind, a fatal condition to be in, or at best useful only as a means to get at knowledge; and to spend one's time reducing realities to theories is to be in an enchanted state of mind. Morality, the very centre of the existence of man, was in the eighteenth century reduced to a theory—by Adam Smith to a theory of the sympathies and Moral Sense; by Hume to expediency, "the most melancholy theory ever propounded." Besides morality, everything else was in the same state.

"A dim, huge, immeasurable steam-engine they had made of this world, and, as Jean Paul says, heaven became a gas; God, a force; the second world, a grave. . . . In that huge universe become one vast steam-engine, as it were, the new generation that followed must have found it a very difficult position to be in, and perfectly insupportable for them, to be doomed to live in such a place of falsehood and chimera; and that was in fact the case with them, and it led to the second great phenomenon we have to notice —the introduction of Wertherism." *

Werther was right:—

"If the world were really no better than what Goethe imagined it to be, there was nothing for it but suicide; if it had nothing to support itself upon but these poor sentimentalities, view-hunting trivialities, this world was really not fit to live in. But in the end the conviction that this theory of the world was wrong came to Goethe himself, greatly to his own profit, greatly to the world's profit."

* A notice, far from accurate, of the origin of Goethe's "Werther" here follows, and the time is thus characterised by the future historian of Frederick: "It was a time of haggard condition; no genuine hope in men's minds; all outwards was false—the last war for example, the Seven Years' War, the most absurd of wars ever undertaken, on no public principle, a contest between France and Germany, from Frederick the Great wanting to have Silesia, and Louis the Fifteenth wanting to give Madame de Pompadour some influence in the affairs of Europe; and 50,000 men were shot for that purpose."

The same phenomenon shows itself in Schiller's "Robbers." Life to the robber seems one huge bedlam, and a brave man can do nothing with it but revolt against it. In our own literature Byron represents a similar phasis. He is full of "rage and scowl against the whole universe as a place not worthy that a genuine man should live in it. He seems to have been a compound of the Robbers and Werther put together." This sentimentalism is the ultimatum of scepticism. That theory of the universe cannot be true; for if it were there would be no other way for it but Werther's, to put an end to it; for all mankind "to return to the bosom of their Father with a sort of dumb protest against it. There was, therefore, a deep sincerity in the sentimentalism, not a right kind of sincerity perhaps, but still a struggling towards it." *

All this—scepticism, sentimentalism, theorising, dependence on the opinion of others, wages taken and no duty done—went on and on. And then came the consummation of scepticism. "We can well conceive the end of the last century, the crisis which then took place, the prurience of self-conceit, the talk of illumination, the darkness of confusion." The new French kind of belief was belief in the doctrine of Rousseau, "a kind of half-madman, but of tender pity too, struggling for sincerity through his whole life, till his own vanity and egotism drove him quite blind and desperate." Then appeared one of the frightfullest phenomena ever seen among men, the French Revolution. "It was after all a new revelation of an old truth to this unfortunate people;

* A notice of "Goetz von Berlichingen" follows.

they beheld, indeed, the truth there clad in hell-fire, but they got the truth." It began in all the golden radiance of hope; it is impossible to doubt the perfect sincerity of the men. At first "for the upper class of people it was the joyfullest of news; now at last they had got something to do; . . . certainly to starve to death is hard, but not so hard as to idle to death."

But the French theory of life was false—that men are to do their duty in order to give happiness to themselves and one another. And where dishonest and foolish people are, there will always be dishonesty and folly; we can't distil knavery into honesty. Europe rose and assembled and came round France, and tried to crush the Revolution, but could not crush it all. "It was the primeval feeling of nature they came to crush, but [the spirit of France *] rallied, and stood up and asserted itself, and made Europe know even in the marrow of its bones that it was there." Bonaparte set his foot on the necks of the nations of Europe. Bonaparte himself was a reality at first, the great armed soldier of democracy, with a true appreciation of the Revolution, as opening the career to all talents; but at last he became a poor egotist, and stirring up the old Berserkir rage against him, he burned himself up in a day. "On the whole, the French Revolution was only a great outburst of the truth that the world wasn't a mere chimera, but a great reality."

Having seen how scepticism burned itself up, it becomes interesting to inquire (*Lecture XII.*), What are we to look for now? Are we to reckon on a new period

* Word omitted in MS.

of things, of better infinitely extending hopes? We do see good in store for us. The fable of the phœnix rising out of its own ashes, which was interpreted by the rise of modern Europe out of the Roman Empire, is interpreted again in the French Revolution. On the spiritual side of things we see the phœnix in the modern school of German literature.* We might inquire, What new doctrine is it that is now proposed to us? What is the meaning of German literature? But this question is not susceptible of any immediate answer, for German literature has no particular theory at all in the front of it. The object of the men who constructed it was not to save the world, but to work out in some manner an enfranchisement for their own souls. And—

"seeing here the blessed, thrice-blessed phenomenon of men unmutilated in all that constitutes man, able to believe and be in all things men, seeing this, I say, there is here the thing that has all other things presupposed in it. . . . To explain, I can only think of the Revelation, for I can call it no other, that these men made to me. It was to me like the rising of a light in the darkness which lay around, and threatened to swallow me up. I was then in the very midst of Wertherism, the blackness and darkness of death. There was one thing in particular struck me in Goethe. It is in his 'Wilhelm Meister.' He had been describing an association of all sorts of people of talent, formed to receive propositions and give responses to them, all of which he described with a sort of seriousness at first, but with irony at the last. However, these people had their eyes on Wilhelm Meister, with great cunning watching over him at a distance at first, not interfering with him too soon; at last the man who was intrusted with the management of the thing took him in hand, and began to give him an account of how the association acted. Now this is the thing, which, as I said, so much struck me. He tells Wilhelm Meister that a

* Carlyle is assured that there are few in his audience able to read German, but anticipates a better time.

number of applications for advice were daily made to the association, which were answered thus and thus; but that many people wrote in particular for recipes of happiness; all *that*, he adds, was laid on the shelf, and not answered at all. Now this thing gave me great surprise when I read it. 'What!' I said, 'is it not the recipe of happiness that I have been seeking all my life, and isn't it precisely because I have failed in finding it that I am now miserable and discontented?' Had I supposed, as some people do, that Goethe was fond of paradoxes, that this was consistent with the sincerity and modesty of the man's mind, I had certainly rejected it without further trouble; but I couldn't think it. At length, after turning it up a great while in my own mind, I got to see that it was very true what he said—that it was the thing that all the world were in error in. No man has a right to ask for a recipe for happiness; he can do without happiness; there is something better than that. All kinds of men who have done great things—priests, prophets, sages—have had in them something higher than the love of happiness to guide them, spiritual clearness and perfection, a far better thing that than happiness. Love of happiness is but a kind of hunger at the best, a craving because I have not enough of sweet provision in this world. If I am asked what that higher thing is, I cannot at once make answer, I am afraid of causing mistake. There is no name I can give it that is not to be questioned; I couldn't speak about it; there is no name for it, but pity for that heart that does not feel it; there is no good volition in that heart. This higher thing was once named the Cross of Christ—not a happy thing *that*, surely." *

The whole of German literature is not to be reduced to a seeking of this higher thing, but such was the commencement of it. The philosophers of Germany are glanced at.

"I studied them once attentively, but found that I got nothing out of them. One may just say of them that they are the precisely opposite to Hume. . . . This study of metaphysics, I say, had only the result, after bringing me rapidly through different phases of opinion, at last to deliver me altogether out of metaphysics. I found it altogether a frothy system, no right beginning to it, no

* Compare with this passage "the Everlasting Yea" of "Sartor Resartus."

right ending. I began with Hume and Diderot, and as long as I was with them I ran at atheism, at blackness, at materialism of all kinds. If I read Kant I arrived at precisely opposite conclusions, that all the world was spirit, namely, that there was nothing material at all anywhere; and the result was what I have stated, that I resolved for my part on having nothing more to do with metaphysics at all."

After the Werther period Goethe "got himself organised at last, built up his mind, adjusted to what he can't cure, not suicidally grinding itself to pieces." For a time the Ideal, Art, Painting, Poetry, were in his view the highest things, goodness being included in these. God became for him "only a stubborn force, really a heathen kind of thing." As his mind gets higher it becomes more serious too, uttering tones of most beautiful devoutness. "In the 'West-östlicher Divan,' though the garb is Persian, the whole spirit is Christianity, it is Goethe himself the old poet, who goes up and down singing little snatches of his own feelings on different things. It grows extremely beautiful as it goes on, full of the finest things possible, which sound like the jingling of bells when the queen of the fairies rides abroad." *

Of Schiller the principal characteristic is "a chivalry of thought, described by Goethe as the spirit of freedom struggling ever forward to be free." His "Don Carlos"

"is well described as being like to a lighthouse, high, far-seen, and withal empty. It is in fact very like what the people of that day, the Girondists of the French Revolution, were always talking about, the *Bonheur du peuple* and the rest. . . . There was a noble-

* A defence of Goethe from the charges of over-serenity and political indifference follows.

ness in Schiller, a brotherly feeling, a kindness of sympathy for what is true and just. There was a kind of silence too at the last. He gave up his talk about the *Bonheur du peuple*, and tried to see if he could make them happier instead."

The third great writer in modern Germany is Richter.

"Goethe was a strong man, as strong as the mountain rocks, but as soft as the green sward upon the rocks, and like them continually bright and sun-beshone. Richter, on the contrary, was what he has been called, a half-made man; he struggled with the world, but was never completely triumphant over it. But one loves Richter. . . . There is more joyous laughter in the heart of Richter than in any other German writer."

We have then much reason to hope about the future; great things are in store for us.

"It is possible for us to attain a spiritual freedom compared with which political enfranchisement is but a name. . . . I can't close this lecture better than by repeating these words of Richter, *Thou, Eternal Providence, wilt cause the day to dawn.*

"Nothing now remains for me but to take my leave of you—a sad thing at all times that word, but doubly so in this case. When I think of what you are, and of what I am, I cannot help feeling that you have been kind to me; I won't trust myself to say how kind; but you have been as kind to me as ever audience was to man, and the gratitude which I owe you comes to you from the bottom of my heart. May God be with you all!"

SHELLEY'S "PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW OF REFORM."

(A TRANSCRIPT.)

THROUGH the kindness of Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, I have had the privilege of reading an unpublished prose work by Shelley, of greater length than any other prose writing of his except his boyish romances, a late product of that *annus mirabilis* which gave birth to the "Prometheus Unbound" and "The Cenci." It treats of a subject which often occupied Shelley's thoughts and profoundly interested his feelings. To have introduced a full account of this work into the Life of Shelley on which I have been long engaged would, I found, have interrupted the narrative with a digression of unsuitable length, yet it seems desirable that those persons—and they are many—who would make themselves acquainted with the total achievement, in all its breadth and variety, of Shelley's extraordinary thirty years, should, in common with me, possess some acquaintance with a piece of writing belonging to his period of full maturity, which may be viewed in a certain sense as a prose comment on those poems that anticipate, as does the "Prometheus Unbound," a better and happier life of man than the life attained in our century of sorrow, and toil, and hope. Within the limits of an article in a Review, I can do no more than

give an outline of Shelley's treatise, with extracts which may serve to represent the whole.* It is to be hoped that on some fit occasion Sir Percy Shelley may decide to place the entire work—a posthumous gift of its author—in the hands of English readers.†

The manuscript occupies upwards of two hundred pages in a small vellum-bound Italian note-book. On the outer side of one of the covers is a pen-and-ink drawing by Shelley—a landscape with water and trees, filled in with more detail than is common in the delicate pieces of fantastic pencilling or pen-work found among his papers. At one end of the little volume is the fragment, "On Life," which has been assigned, on the internal evidence of style, to the year 1815, but which would hardly have had a place in this Italian note-book if it were of earlier origin than the year 1818 or 1819.‡ The principal manuscript in the volume is evidently, in great part if not altogether, a first draft, showing many corrections, alterations, interlineations, and cancelled sentences; yet, except in a few passages, it is not a very difficult manuscript to read. The work remains unfinished, and the closing pages yield rather a series of fragments than a continuous treatment of the subject under consideration. Nevertheless, it presents with sufficient clearness an aspect of Shelley's mind which some readers will think it worth their while to study, if

* Where I condense and cannot use marks of quotation I yet retain, as far as may be, the words of Shelley.

† "A Treatise on Political Reform," wrote Mrs Shelley in her Preface to Shelley's "Essays, Letters, &c.," "and other fragments remain to be published when his works assume a complete shape."

‡ Of course, it may have been copied from an earlier draft into the note-book, but this is unlikely.

only for the sake of observing how the visions of his poetry were related to his views of real events and the actual condition of English society.

"I have deserted the odorous gardens of literature," Shelley wrote to his friends, Mr and Mrs Gisborne, on November 6, 1819, "to journey across the great sandy desert of politics, not, as you may imagine, without the hope of finding some enchanted paradise. In all probability I shall be overwhelmed by one of the tempestuous columns which are for ever traversing with the speed of a storm and the confusion of a chaos that pathless wilderness."* "I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science," he had written to Peacock in the opening of the year, "and, if I were well, certainly I would aspire to the latter, for I can conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages, and harmonising the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled." Such a work as this Shelley did not dare to attempt; but in the preface to "Prometheus Unbound" he speaks of a purpose, actually entertained by him, of writing, with Plato for his master and model, a "systematical history" of what he conceived to be "the genuine elements of society." This ambitious design was never carried into effect. But Shelley still desired to utter his thoughts on politics, and before the year closed he had begun an essay at once occasional and philosophical, having reference to the present state of England, but viewing the facts of society through the

* A few sentences here and elsewhere in this article have appeared in the brief account which I have given of the "Philosophical View of Reform" in my "Life of Shelley," vol. ii., pp. 290-297.

medium of general principles. "One thing I want to ask you," he wrote to Leigh Hunt (May 26, 1820), "Do you know any bookseller who would publish for me an octavo volume, entitled 'A Philosophical View of Reform'? It is boldly but temperately written, and, I think, readable. It is intended for a kind of standard book for the philosophical reformers, politically considered, like Jeremy Bentham's something, but different and, perhaps, more systematic. I would send it sheet by sheet. Would you ask and think for me?" Shelley, in 1819, had hoped to publish a series of poems intended to arouse the people of England to a sense of their actual condition, to quicken and purify their feelings, and to guide their imagination towards the true objects of national aspiration and endeavour. A few of these songs were written; they are not without their worth and beauty, but they show that Shelley's genius was not well fitted to strike, and strike again, the chords whose vibrations thrill and animate a multitude. The same desire to serve the Liberal or Radical cause in England which moved him to utter himself in verse that aimed at being popular, moved him also to set forth his political views in a prose essay. While holding opinions antagonistic in many respects to the existing social order, Shelley now, as always, was opposed to mob violence and the brutality of physical force; he feared the influence of the demagogue on the passions of the people. It was Shelley's object to encourage men to desire and expect a vast transformation of society, but a transformation which should be gradual, and unstained by cruelty or crime.

The year 1819—that in which Shelley, in Rome, Leghorn, and Florence, achieved his highest work in poetry—was in England a year of commercial distress and political agitation. The reformers, it is said, now first assumed the name of Radicals. A Female Reform Society, too, now came into existence, of which one object was to instil into the minds of children "a deep-rooted hatred of our tyrannical rulers." The men of Lancashire, when they left their looms and spindles at dusk, gathered together in the fields, and went through their secret drillings "with a steadiness and a regularity," says Bamford, "which would not have disgraced a regiment on parade." In August was held that memorable open-air meeting in St Peter's Field, Manchester, under the leadership of Orator Hunt, when a display of force on the part of the perplexed magistrates led, through misadventure rather than design, to the death of several persons in the excited crowd. "The country," said Lord Eldon, "must make new laws to meet this state of things, or we must have a shocking choice between military government and anarchy." New laws accordingly were made—laws which forbade public meetings without the license of magistrates, which permitted the search of private houses for arms, which authorised the transportation beyond the seas of one who had been twice convicted of publishing a libel. When the news of the Peterloo "massacre" reached Italy, Shelley was deeply moved, and wrote that admirable poem, "The Mask of Anarchy," in which something of prophetic vision and something of prophetic exhortation were united. What in his own land was

named "order" appeared to Shelley to be in fact anarchy disguised and masked. The chief courtiers of King Anarchy were Eldon, and Sidmouth, and Castlereagh. Yet Shelley does not counsel violence. He sets forth an ideal of what true freedom is for the working man of England:—

> "For the labourer thou art bread,
> And a comely table spread,
> From his daily labour come
> To a neat and happy home.
> . . . . .
> Science, and Poetry, and Thought,
> Are thy lamps; they make the lot
> Of the dwellers in a cot
> So serene, they curse it not."

Calmness, moderation, the patience of unquenched hope and long-suffering, the patience, if need be, of martyrdom—these it is to which Shelley exhorts the English people. If force be arrayed against them, let them confront the bayonet and the sword with tranquil, unarmed breasts, and accept the laws of their country as arbiters of the dispute.

> "The old laws of England—they
> Whose reverend heads with age are grey,
> Children of a wiser day:
> And whose solemn voice must be
> Thine own echo—Liberty!"

"The Mask of Anarchy" was sent to England for insertion in "The Examiner," if it should appear suitable to the editor. "I did not insert it," writes Hunt, "because I thought that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the

sincerity and kind-heartedness of the spirit that walked in this flaming robe of verse."

"Those who imagine that their personal interest is directly or indirectly concerned in maintaining the power in which they are clothed by the existing institutions of English government, do not acknowledge the necessity of a material change in those institutions. With this exception, there is no inhabitant of the British [Isles]* of mature age and perfect understanding not fully persuaded of the necessity of reform." With these words Shelley's prose treatise, "A Philosophical View of Reform," opens. An introduction follows, in which a brief historical survey is attempted of the chief movements on behalf of freedom which have embodied the hopes and aspirations of mankind with respect to a happier social, moral, and intellectual state since the opening of the Christian era. For the student of history its value is slight; but for one who would know the habits of thought and feeling which found a lyrical utterance in the "Ode to Liberty" and the noble choral passages of "Hellas," Shelley's sketch of the history of human progress cannot be without interest. In the "Hellas," Shelley tells how—

> "Apollo, Pan, and Love,
> And even Olympian Jove,"

fled before "the folding star of Bethlehem." The popular notions of Christianity are represented in the poem as true "in relation to the worship they superseded . . . without considering their merits in a rela-

* Where I am uncertain as to the text I use brackets.

tion more universal." In the "Philosophical View of Reform" historical Christianity is described as founded on an unhappy perversion of the utterances and actions of the great reformer and philanthropist of Nazareth.

"The names borrowed from the life and opinions of Jesus Christ were employed as symbols of domination and imposture; and a system of liberty and equality, for such was the system preached by that great Reformer, was perverted to support oppression. Not his doctrines, for they are too simple and direct to be susceptible of such perversion; but the mere names. Such was the origin of the Catholic Church, which, together with the several dynasties then beginning to consolidate themselves in Europe, means, being interpreted, a plan according to which the cunning and selfish few have employed the fears and hopes of the ignorant many to the establishment of their own power and the destruction of the real interests of all."

Shelley's studies had never led him to form any real acquaintance with the men of lofty intellect and heroic character who had appeared among the master builders of the Christian Church; nor had he duly estimated the enfranchisement of the affections and the spiritual ardours of humanity attained through the Christian religion.

The connection between liberty and the higher strivings of man's spirit in literature and art is a topic on which he dwells at the first, and one to which he returns again and again:—

"The Republics and municipal governments of Italy opposed for some time a systematic and effectual resistance to the all-surrounding tyranny. The Lombard League defeated the armies of the despot in the open field, and until Florence was betrayed to those polished tyrants, the Medici, Freedom had one citadel wherein it could find refuge from a world which was its enemy. Florence long balanced, divided, and weakened the strength of the Empire and the Popedom. To this cause, if to anything, was due the un-

disputed superiority of Italy in literature and the arts over all its contemporary nations; that union of energy and of beauty which distinguish from all other poets the writings of Dante, that restlessness of fervid power which expressed itself in painting and sculpture, and in architectural forms rude but daring, and from which conjointly with the creations of Athens, its predecessor and its image, Raphael and Michael Angelo drew the inspiration of what is now the astonishment of the world. The father of our own literature, Chaucer, wrought from the simple and powerful language of a nurseling of this Republic the basis of our own literature. And thus we owe, among other causes, the exact condition belonging to our intellectual existence to the generous disdain of submission which burnt in the bosoms of men who filled a distant generation and inhabited another land."

The resistance offered to fraud and tyranny by the Italian Republics was after a time overpowered; but already the progress of philosophy and civilisation was leading towards that great series of events known as the Reformation. Unhappily, like its child of a later century, the Revolution in France, the movement was not free from violence and wrong. "Exasperated by their long sufferings, influenced by the sparks of that superstition from the flames of which they were emerging, the poor rose against their natural enemies the rich, and repaid with bloody interest the tyranny of ages. One of the signs of the times was that the oppressed peasantry rose like the slaves of a West Indian plantation, and murdered their tyrants when they were unaware. The tyrants themselves neither then, nor now, nor ever, left or leave a path to freedom but through their own blood." The Reformation resulted in no more than a partial and imperfect emancipation of mankind from "the yoke of kings and priests," yet the result is "perhaps the most animating that the philan-

thropist can contemplate in the history of man. The Republic of Holland, which had been so long [*word undeciphered*] the arrows of learning by which superstition has been wounded even to death, was established by this contest. What, though the name of Republic (and by whom but by conscience-stricken tyrants could it be extinguished?) is no more? the Republics of Switzerland derived from this event their consolidation and their union. From England then first began to pass away the stain of conquest. The exposition of a certain portion of religious imposture drew with it an inquiry into political imposture, and was attended with an extraordinary exertion of the energies of intellectual power. Shakspere and Lord Bacon and the great writers of the age of Elizabeth were at once the effects of the new spirit in men's minds and the cause of its more complete development." The temporary abolition of aristocracy and episcopacy soon followed; and England afforded to the world the "mighty example" of bringing to public justice "one of those chiefs of a conspiracy of public murderers and robbers whose inhumanity has been the consecration of crime." * These words of Shelley are not without interest when we bear in mind the fact that he was engaged in the last year of his life on the drama of "Charles the First." His instincts as a dramatist held in check his political

* Shelley adds in brackets an unfinished sentence: "The maxim that criminals should be pitied and reformed, not detested and punished, alone affords a source of ——" It may be surmised that he stood perplexed between his abstract doctrine, learnt from Godwin, and his enthusiasm on behalf of an act, to justify which Milton employed argument and eloquence.

partisanship. "I ought to say that the tragedy promises to be good as tragedies go," he told his publisher Ollier, in a letter which has not been printed (Jan. 11, 1821), "and that it is not coloured by the party spirit of the author."

The Revolution which replaced James II. by a constitutional monarch is viewed by Shelley with mingled feelings of pleasure and dissatisfaction. It was "a compromise between the unextinguishable spirit of liberty and the ever-watchful spirit of fraud and tyranny." Monarchy, and aristocracy, and episcopacy were at once established and limited by law—"unfortunately they lost no more in extent of power than they gained in security of possession." Yet as the incomplete spiritual emancipation called the Reformation established the maxim that the right to protest against religious dogmas which present themselves to his mind as false, is the inalienable prerogative of every human being, so the Revolution of 1688, though but a compromise, established the will of the people as the source from which monarchy, aristocracy, and episcopacy derive the right to subsist—"a man has no right to be a king, or a lord, or a bishop, but so long as it is for the benefit of the people, and so long as the people judge that it is for their benefit that he should impersonate that character. . . . In both instances [the Reformation and the English Revolution] the maxims so solemnly recorded remain as trophies of our difficult and incomplete victory planted on the enemies' land."

With the decay of the old unreserved belief in those errors upon which the superstructure of political and

religious tyranny was built, began an epoch distinguished by deeper inquiries than had previously been possible into the nature of man. Bacon, Spinoza, Hobbes, Bayle, Montesquieu,* regulated the reasoning powers, criticised the history, exposed the past errors of humanity.

"Then with a less interval of time than of genius followed Locke, and the philosophers of his exact and intelligible but superficial school. Their illustrations of the [*word undeciphered*] consequences of the doctrine established by the sublime genius of their predecessors were correct, popular, and energetic. Above all they indicated inferences the most incompatible with the popular religions and the established governments of Europe. Philosophy went into the enchanted forest of the dæmons of Worldly Power as the pioneer of the overgrowth of ages."†

Berkeley and Hume, following these eminent thinkers, established the certainty of our ignorance with respect to those obscure questions, the crude answers to which have been misnamed religious truths. A crowd of writers in France seized upon the most popular topics in the doctrine of the great philosophers, and made familiar to the multitude those particular portions of the new philosophy which conducted to inferences at war with the dreadful oppressions under which that country groaned.

"Considered as philosophers their error seems to have consisted chiefly in a limitation of view; they told the truth, but not the whole truth. This has arisen from the terrible sufferings of their countrymen, inciting them rather to apply a portion of what had already been discovered to their immediate relief, than to pursue the abstractions of thought, as the great philosophers who preceded

* The name of Descartes is written and is struck out by Shelley.

† This last sentence is enclosed in brackets by Shelley, as if for reconsideration.

them had done for the sake of a future and more universal advantage."* Whilst that philosophy which, burying itself in the obscurer parts of our nature, regards the truth and falsehood of dogmas relating to the cause of the universe and the nature and manner of man's relation with it, was thus stripping power of its darkest mask, Political Philosophy, or that which considers the relations of man as a social being, was assuming a precise form. That Philosophy indeed sprang from, and maintained a connection with, that other as its parent. What would Swift and Bolingbroke and Sidney and Locke and Montesquieu, or even Rousseau, not to speak of political philosophers, Godwin and Bentham, have been but for Lord Bacon, Montaigne, and Spinoza, and the other great luminaries of the preceding epoch? Something excellent and eminent, no doubt, the last of these would have been, but something different from and inferior to what they are."

While these inquiries were proceeding the mechanical sciences attained to an extraordinary degree of advancement, commerce was pursued with a perpetually increasing vigour, the means and sources of knowledge were increased, together with knowledge itself. This was well; but freedom and equality, the elementary principles according to which the benefits resulting from the social union ought to be distributed, were not yet incarnated in institutions, and hence the advantages resulting from the increase of man's power became an instrument for his additional misery.

"The capabilities of happiness were increased and applied to the augmentation of misery. Modern society is thus a machine designed for useful purposes, whose force is by a system of subtle mechanism augmented to the highest power, but which, instead of grinding corn or raising water, acts against itself, and is perpetually wearing away the wheels of which it is composed. The result of

* "The French," writes Shelley elsewhere in this MS., "were what their literature is (excluding Montesquieu and Rousseau) weak, superficial, vain, with little imagination, and with passions as well as judgments cleaving to the external forms of things." It was, he says, their institutions which made them what they are.

the labours of the political philosophers has been the establishment of the principle of Utility as the substance, and liberty and equality as the forms, according to which the concerns of human life ought to be administered. By this test the various institutions regulating political society have been tried, and, as the undigested growth of the private passions, errors, and interests of barbarians and oppressors, have been condemned. And many new theories, more or less perfect, but all superior to the mass of evil which they would supplant, have been given to the world."

The first practical illustration of the new philosophy is seen in the government of the United States. "Sufficiently remote, it will be confessed, from the accuracy of ideal excellence is that representative system which will soon cover the extent of that vast continent. But it is scarcely less remote from the insolent and contaminating tyrannies under which, with some limitations of their terms as regards England, Europe groaned at the period of the successful rebellion of America." * More than anything else in the constitution of the United States Shelley admired the provision made for its modification, if needful or desirable, from time to time.

"Lastly, it has an institution by which it is honourably distinguished from all other governments which ever existed. It constitutionally acknowledges the progress of human improvement, and is framed under the limitation of the probability of more simple views of political science being rendered applicable to human life. There is a law by which the constitution is reserved for revision every ten years. Every other set of men who assumed the office of legislating and framing institutions for future ages, with far less right to such an assumption than the founders of the American Republic, assumed to themselves the idea that their work was the wisest and best that could possibly have been produced; these illustrious men looked upon the past history of man, saw that it

* The reader will remember the eloquent *éloge* of American freedom which closes the eleventh canto of "The Revolt of Islam.

was the history of his mistakes, and his sufferings arising from his mistakes; they observed the superiority of their own work to all the works which had preceded it, and then judged it probable that other political institutions would be discovered bearing the same relation to those they had established which they bear to those which have preceded them. They provided therefore for the application of these contingent discoveries to the social state, without the violence and misery attendant upon such change in less modest and more imperfect governments."

The freedom, happiness, and strength of the people of the United States are due not merely to their situation, but to their government. Give them a king, an aristocracy, a priesthood bribed with a tenth part of the produce of the soil, a multitude of drones enjoying the fruits of the workers, a Court of Chancery to assume to itself the most sacred rights of a citizen, a standing army to cut down the people if they murmur: "If any American should see these words his blood would run cold at the imagination of such a change. He well knows that the prosperity and happiness of the United States would, if subjected to such institutions, be no more." In one matter, however, America must look to itself; two conditions are necessary to a perfect government: first, "that the will of the people should be represented as it is;" secondly, "that that will should be as wise and just as possible." Only the former of these is possessed by "the most perfect of practical governments, the Republic of the United States." And yet "in a certain extent the mere representation of the public will produces in itself a wholesome condition of it, and in this extent America fulfils imperfectly and indirectly the last and most important condition of perfect government."

My space does not permit me to follow Shelley

through his survey of contemporary France (undergoing a reaction after the great revolution, yet in essentials a regenerated nation), Germany (preparing for some stupendous change), Spain, South America, India,* Persia, Turkey, Asia Minor, the negro races. From the condition of each he draws some augury of hope, and then returns from this wide-orbing flight to his own land. The long introduction to his essay closes with that well-known and remarkable passage which was afterwards transferred from this essay to form the closing pages of "A Defence of Poetry," where Shelley recognises in the outburst of English poetry in the present century "the herald, companion or follower of the awakening of a great people," and in all great poets "the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present . . . the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Across the page he has written in bold characters the words: "In this sense religion may be called poetry, though distorted from the beautiful simplicity of its truth. Coleridge has said that every poet was religious; the converse, that every religious man must be a poet was a more true——" †

Here Shelley pauses to draw in outline the design of what should follow. The plan of the work was to include chapters treating of: 1, the sentiment of the necessity of change; 2, its causes and its object; 3,

* India, Shelley holds, will be benefited by the Christian missionaries; but it must in the end attain a freedom of its own. The Persians he describes as a refined and impassioned people.

† Shelley said the same to Medwin. "Conversations with Byron," ii. 32. (Ed. 1832.)

practicability and necessity of change; 4, state of parties as regards it; 5, probable, possible, and desirable mode in which it should be effected.

All the privileged classes are, as a matter of course, the enemies of reform. They profess a terror of anarchy, a terror certainly not disinterested, and as certainly exaggerated. "These persons propose the dilemma of submitting to a despotism which is perpetually gathering like an avalanche year by year, or taking the risk of something which, it must be confessed, wears the aspect of revolution. To this alternative we are reduced by the selfishness of those who taunt us with it. And the history of the world teaches us not to hesitate an instant in the decision, if indeed the power of decision be not already past."

Having traced briefly the history of parliamentary representation since the Long Parliament, noticing in particular the vast growth in the number of unrepresented citizens as compared with those who possess the franchise and the increased influence of the aristocracy on elections, Shelley passes on to speak of "the device of public credit," and spurious money transactions effected by paper.

"Of this nature are all such transactions of companies and banks as consist in the circulation of promissory notes to a greater extent than the actual property possessed by those whose names they bear. They have the effect of augmenting the price of provisions, and of benefiting at the expense of the community the speculators in this traffic. One of the vaunted effects of this system is to increase the national industry—that is, to increase the labours of the poor, and those luxuries which they supply the rich; to make a manufacturer [*i.e.* as we now say, an operative or artisan] work sixteen hours where he only worked eight; to turn children into lifeless

and bloodless machines at an age when otherwise they would be at play before the cottage doors of their parents; to augment indefinitely the proportion of those who enjoy the profit of the labour of others as compared with those who exercise this labour." *

Hence has arisen a new aristocracy, having its basis in fraud as the old aristocracy had its basis in force.† The object of all enlightened legislation and administration is to enclose within the narrowest practicable limits the class of drones. The effect of the financial impostures of the modern rulers of England has been to increase the number of drones. In addition to the aristocracy of great landowners and merchants, who possess "a certain generosity and refinement of manners and opinions which, although neither philosophy nor virtue, has been that acknowledged substitute for them, which at least is a religion, which makes respected those venerable names," there has come into existence an aristocracy of "attorneys, excisemen, directors, government pensioners, usurers, stock-jobbers, with their dependants and descendants."

"These are a set of pelting wretches, in whose employment there is nothing to exercise, even to their distortion, the more majestic forces of the soul. Though at the bottom it is all trick, there is something frank and magnificent in the chivalrous disdain of infamy of a gentleman. There is something to which—until you see through the base falsehood upon which all inequality is founded—it is difficult for the imagination to refuse its respect in the faithful and direct dealings of the substantial merchant. But in the habits and lives of this new aristocracy, created out of an increase in public calamities, whose existence must be terminated with their termina-

* Shelley advises his readers to study Cobbett's "Paper Against Gold."

† In his translation of Goethe's "May-Day Night" scene from *Faust* Shelley adds a note to the name of the speaker entitled "Parvenu"—"*A sort of fundholder.*"

tion, there is nothing to qualify our disapprobation. They eat and drink and sleep, and in the intervals of these actions they cringe and lie."

It is these who, by requiring mediocrity in books, poison literature; their hopes and fears are of the narrowest description; their domestic affections are feeble, and beyond the domestic affections they have none.

Meanwhile the toil and misery of the poor increase. For fourteen hours' labour they receive the price of seven. "They eat less bread, wear worse clothes, are more ignorant, immoral, miserable, and desperate." If they believe that the same immutable God rules the next world who also rules this, what must their outlook be! "The gleams of hope which speak of Paradise seem, like the flames of Milton's Hell, only to make darkness visible, and all things take their colour from what surrounds them."

The choice for England is between reform, or insurrection, or a military despotism. What, then, is the reform that we desire?

"A writer [Malthus] . . . has stated that the evils of the poor arise from an excess of population, and that after they have been stript naked by the tax-gatherer and reduced to bread and tea and fourteen hours of hard labour by their masters, after the frost has bitten their defenceless limbs, and the damp driven disease into their bones, and the suppressed revenge of hunger stamped the ferocity of want like the mark of Cain upon their countenance, the last tie by which Nature holds them to benignant earth, whose plenty is garnered up in the strongholds of their tyrants, is to be divided; that the single alleviation of their sufferings and their scorns, the one thing which made it impossible to degrade them below the beasts, which amid all their crimes and miseries yet separated a cynical and unmanly contamination, an anti-social

cruelty from all the soothing and elevating and harmonizing gentleness of the sexual intercourse, and the humanizing charities of domestic life, which are its appendages—that this is to be obliterated."

The reform according to Malthus is not the reform desired by Shelley. What, then, is that reform? Before aspiring after theoretical perfection in the State, we must possess, he says, the advantages of which nations are at present susceptible. To abolish the national debt; to disband the standing army; to abolish tithes, due regard being had to vested interests; to grant complete freedom to thought and its expression; to render justice cheap, speedy, and secure—these measures, Shelley believed, would together constitute a reform which we might accept as sufficient for a time. Filled as he was with boundless hopes for the future, these demands for the present seemed to him reasonable and moderate.

"The payment of the principal of what is called the National Debt, which it is pretended is so difficult a problem, is only difficult to those who do not see who are the creditors, and who the debtors, and who the wretched sufferers from whom they both wring the taxes." In truth the nation is not the debtor; the debt was contracted not by the nation towards a portion of it, but by the whole mass of the privileged classes towards one particular portion of those classes. It is this which is the cause of our misery—the unjust distribution, surreptitiously made under the form of the National Debt, of the products of the labour of England.

"The National Debt was chiefly contracted in two liberticide wars undertaken by the privileged classes of the country; the first for the purpose of tyrannizing over one portion of their subjects;

the second in order to extinguish the resolute spirit of attaining their rights in another. The labour which this money represents, and that which is represented by the money wrung for purposes of the same detestable character out of the people since the commencement of the American War, would, if properly employed, have covered our land with monuments of architecture exceeding the sumptuousness and the beauty of Egypt and Athens: it might have made every peasant's cottage a little paradise of comfort, with every convenience desirable in [*word undeciphered*],—neat tables and chairs, and good beds, and a collection of useful books; and our fleet, manned by sailors well-paid and well-clothed, might have kept watch round this glorious island against the less enlightened nations which assuredly would have envied its prosperity. But the labour which is expressed by these sums has been diverted from these purposes of human happiness to the promotion of slavery, or the attempt at dominion; and a great portion of the sum in question is debt and must be paid."

The payment of the interest falls chiefly on those who had no hand in the creation of the debt, and who are sufferers from the transactions in which the money was spent; and this tax is wrung from them in order to maintain in luxury and indolence the public debtors. It is commonly said that the National Debts were contracted by all classes of the nation for defence against a common danger, and for the vindication of the rights and liberties of posterity, and therefore that posterity should bear the burden of payment. This reasoning is most fallacious; the debts were largely contracted to carry on wars of revenge, of jealousy, and of ambition. The whole property of the nation is mortgaged for the so-called National Debt; to use the language of the law, let the mortgage foreclose. One of the first acts of a reformed Government would undoubtedly be an effectual scheme for compelling the debtors and credi-

tors, that is, the privileged classes as a whole, and a certain portion of those classes, to compromise the debt between themselves. Tribunals would be appointed to consider and decide upon the claims of every fundholder.* There are two descriptions of property, the holders of which are entitled to two very different measures of forbearance and regard.

"Labour, industry, economy, skill, genius, or any similar powers honourably and innocently exerted, are the foundations of one description of property. All true political institutions ought to defend every man in the exercise of his discretion with respect to property so acquired. . . . But there is another species of property which has its foundation in usurpation, or imposture, or violence; without which, by the nature of things, immense aggregations of property could never have been accumulated. Of this nature is the principal part of the property enjoyed by the aristocracy and by the great fundholders, the majority of whose ancestors never either deserved it by their skill and talents or created it by their personal labour."

Claims to property of this latter kind should be compromised under the supervision of public tribunals. If Shelley advocates confiscation, it is just to remember that he did not write as one of the greedy *have-nots*, but as heir to a large aggregation of wealth, which he was prepared to forfeit.

Such, then, would be the action of a reformed Parliament with reference to the National Debt. But what is meant by a reform of Parliament? Doubtless, from an abstract point of view, universal sufferage is desirable and right; but *abstractedly* other and greater changes are also right—the abolition of monarchy and aristocracy, the levelling of inordinate wealth, and an agrarian

* I am not quite certain that I understand aright Shelley's proposal.

distribution of the uncultivated districts of the country. Universal suffrage would assuredly lead to these measures, but in doing so it would assuredly lead to civil war, and this, beside its other attendant evils, would confirm the nation in its military habits, with which true liberty is incompatible. Any sudden attempt to establish universal suffrage would result in an immature attempt to establish a Republic; and if this should fail, the last state of the nation might be worse than the first. Now, therefore, in 1819-20, as three years earlier when Shelley wrote at Marlow his pamphlet on Reform, he advocates a gradual reform of the representative system. He would have the House of Lords remain for the present as it is to represent the aristocracy. The House of Commons should represent, in fact and not merely in name, the people. The entire empire might be divided into five hundred districts, each returning one member of Parliament. In each district there would be a population of 40,000, or, allowing two-thirds for women and children, 13,300 men. A small property qualification, proved by the payment of a certain sum in direct taxes, should distinguish the electors.

"Mr Bentham and other writers have urged the admission of females to the right of suffrage. This attempt seems somewhat immature. Should my opinion be the result of despondency, the writer of these pages would be the last to withhold his vote from any system which might tend to an equal and full development of the capacities of all living beings."

As to the vote by ballot, the method appeared to Shelley to be too *mechanical*.

"The elector and the elected ought to meet face to face and interchange the meanings of actual presence, share some common

impulses, and in a degree understand each other. There ought to be a common sympathy . . . among the electors themselves. The imagination would thus be strongly excited, and a mass of generous and enlarged and popular sentiments be awakened which would give the vitality of [*sentence unfinished.*] That republican boldness of censuring and judging one another, which has been exerted in England under the name of 'public opinion,' though perverted from its true uses into an instrument of prejudice and calumny, would then be applied to its genuine purposes. Year by year the people would become more susceptible of assuming forms of government more simple and beneficent."

The central principle upon which all reform should be based is that of the *natural equality of men*, not as regards property, but as regards *rights*. The equality taught by Christ is moral rather than political, and it is only as regards abstract principles, not their practical application, that morals and politics can be regarded as parts of the same science. Equality in *possessions* must be "the last result of the utmost refinements of civilisation." It is a goal on which from far off we may gaze. "We derive tranquillity, and courage, and grandeur of soul from contemplating an object which is, because we will it, and may be, because we hope and desire it, and must be, if succeeding generations of the enlightened sincerely and earnestly seek it." From such outlook upon a great and remote object we draw inspiration; then "it becomes us with patience and resolution to apply ourselves to accommodating theories to immediate practice."

Whether the reform, which is now inevitable, be gradual and moderate or violent and extreme, depends largely on the action of the Government. If the Government compel the nation to take the task of

reformation into its own hands, the abolition of monarchy and aristocracy must infallibly follow. "No friend of mankind and of his country can desire that such a crisis should arrive."

"If reform shall be begun by the existing government, let us be contented with a limited beginning, with any whatsoever opening. Let the rotten boroughs be disfranchised, and their rights transferred to the unrepresented cities and districts of the nation. It is no matter how slow, gradual, and cautious be the change. We shall demand more and more with firmness and moderation, never anticipating but never deferring the moment of successful opposition, so that the people may become capable of exercising the sfunctions of sovereignty in proportion as they acquire the posses -ion of it. If reform could begin from within the Houses of Parliament as constituted at present, it appears to me that what is called moderate reform, that is, a suffrage whose qualification should be the possession of a certain small property, and triennial Parliaments, would be principles, a system in which for the sake of obtaining without bloodshed or confusion ulterior improvements of a more important character, all reformers ought to acquiesce. Not that such are first principles, or that they would produce a system of perfect social institution, or one approaching it. But nothing is more idle than to reject a limited benefit because we cannot without great sacrifices obtain an unlimited one. We might thus reject a Republic, if it were attainable, on the plea that the imagination of man can conceive of something more absolutely perfect. Towards whatsoever we regard as perfect, undoubtedly, it is no less our duty than it is our nature to press forward; this is the generous enthusiasm which accomplishes, not indeed the consummation after which it aspires, but one which approaches it in a degree far nearer than if the whole powers had not been developed by delusion which is not a delusion. It is in politics rather than in religion that faith is meritorious."

If the Houses of Parliament obstinately and perpetually refuse to concede any reform to the people, Shelley gives his vote for universal suffrage and equal representation. "But it is asked, How shall this be accomplished in defiance of, and in opposition to, the consti-

tuted authorities of the nation; they who possess, whether with or without its consent, the command of a standing army and of a legion of spies and police officers, and all the strings of that complicated mechanism with which the hopes and fears of men are moved like puppets?" This question Shelley meets, and answers by another: "Will you endure to pay the half of your earnings to maintain in luxury and idleness the confederation of your tyrants as the reward of a successful conspiracy to defraud and oppress you? Will you make your tame cowardice, and the branding record of it the everlasting inheritance of your degraded posterity? Not only this, but will you render by your torpid endurance this condition of things as permanent as the system of castes in India, by which the same horrible injustice is perpetrated under another form? Assuredly no Englishman by whom these propositions are understood will answer in the affirmative, and the opposite side of the alternative remains."

When in any nation the majority arrive at a conviction that it is their duty and their interest to divest the minority of a power employed to their disadvantage, and the minority are sufficiently mistaken as to believe that their superiority is tenable, a struggle must ensue:—

"If the majority are enlightened, united, impelled by a uniform enthusiasm, and animated by a distinct and powerful apprehension of their object and full confidence in their undoubted power, the struggle is merely nominal. The minority perceive the approaches of the development of an irresistible force, by the influence of the public opinion of their weakness on those political forms, of which no government, but an absolute despotism, is devoid. They divest themselves of their usurped distinctions, and the public tranquillity is not disturbed by the revolution.

"But these conditions may only be imperfectly fulfilled by the state of a people grossly oppressed and impatient to cast off the load. Their enthusiasm may have been subdued by the killing weight of toil and suffering; they may be panic-stricken and disunited by the oppressors and the demagogues; the influence of fraud may have been sufficient to weaken the union of classes which compose them by suggesting jealousies; and the position of the conspirators, though it is to be forced by repeated assaults, may be tenable until that the siege can be vigorously urged."

Under such circumstances as these, what is the duty of a patriotic citizen?

"The true patriot will endeavour to enlighten and to unite the nation, and animate it with enthusiasm and confidence. For this purpose he will be indefatigable in promulgating political truth. He will endeavour to rally round one standard the divided friends of liberty, and make them forget the subordinate objects with regard to which they differ by appealing to that respecting which they are all agreed. He will promote such open confederations among men of principle and spirit as may tend to make their intention and their efforts converge to a common centre. He will discourage all secret associations which have a tendency, by making the nation's will develop itself in a partial and premature manner, to cause tumult and confusion. He will urge the necessity of exciting the people frequently to exercise the right of assembling in such limited numbers as that all present may be actual parties to the measures of the day. Lastly, if circumstances had collected a considerable number, as at Manchester on the memorable 16th of August; if the tyrants send their troops to fire upon them or cut them down unless they disperse, he will exhort them peaceably to defy the danger, and to expect without resistance the onset of the cavalry, and wait with folded arms the event of the fire of the artillery, and receive with unshrinking bosoms the bayonets of charging battalions. Men are every day persuaded to incur greater perils for a manifest advantage. And this not because active resistance is not justifiable, but because in this instance temperance and courage produce greater advantages than the most decisive victory."

Shelley's expectation was that the soldiery, if calmly and courageously met, would refuse to fire upon the

people, and might fraternise with them. "The soldiers are men and Englishmen, and it is not to be believed that they would massacre an unresisting multitude of their countrymen drawn up in unarmed array before them, and bearing in their looks a calm and deliberate resolution to perish rather than abandon the assertion of their rights. In the confusion of flight the soldier becomes confused, and he massacres those who fly from him by the instinct of his trade. In the struggle of conflict and resistance he is irritated by a sense of his own danger; he is flattered by an apprehension of his own magnanimity in incurring it." But if he should observe neither resistance nor flight he would suddenly be reduced to doubt and indecision. "Thus far his ideas were governed by the same law as those of a dog who chased a flock of sheep to the corner of a field, and keeps aloof when they make the firm parade of resistance. But the soldier is a man and an Englishman. This unexpected reception would probably throw him back upon a recollection of the measure of which he was made the instrument, and the enemy might be converted into the ally."

Shelley continues to set forth the duties of the patriot under circumstances of difficulty and danger.

"The patriot will be foremost to publish the boldest truths in the most fearless manner, yet without the slightest tincture of personal malignity. He would encourage all others to the same efforts and assist them to the utmost of his power with the resources both of his intellect and fortune. He would call upon them to despise imprisonment and persecution, and lose no opportunity of bringing the public opinion and the power of the tyrants into circumstances of perpetual contest and opposition."

All, however, might be ineffectual to produce so uniform an impulse of the national will as to preclude a further struggle. A considerable mass of the people seem to have fallen into an abject and hopeless apathy, from which it is impossible to rouse them. "It is in vain to exhort us to wait until all men shall desire freedom whose real interest will consist in its establishment. It is in vain to hope to enlighten them whilst their tyrants employ the utmost artifices of all their complicated engines to perpetuate the infection of every species of fanaticism from generation to generation. . . . Infinite and inestimable calamities belong to oppression, but the most fatal of them all is that mine of unexploded mischief it has practised* beneath the foundations of society, and with which it threatens to involve the ruin of the whole building together with its own. But delay merely renders those mischiefs more tremendous, not the less inevitable. The savage brutality of the populace is proportioned to the arbitrary character of the Government; and tumults and insurrections soon, as in Constantinople, become consistent with the permanence of the causing evil, of which they might have been the critical determination."

It is to be borne in mind that the action on the part of the popular leaders which Shelley advocates, supposes as its condition an obstinate and ever-repeated refusal on the part of a parliament, representing but a narrow constituency, to grant any measure, however moderate, of reform.

* An unusual use of the verb *practise*, meaning, perhaps, like the French *pratiquer* in an architectural sense, to "contrive."

"The public opinion in England ought first to be excited to action, and the durability of those forms within which the oppressors entrench themselves, brought perpetually to the test of its operation. To that purpose government ought to be defied, in cases of questionable result, to prosecute for political libel. All questions relating to the jurisdiction of magistrates, and courts of law, respecting which any doubt could be raised, ought to be agitated with indefatigable pertinacity. Some two or three of the popular leaders have shown the best spirit in this respect,* only they want system and co-operation. The tax-gatherer ought to be compelled in every practicable instance to distrain; whilst the right to impose taxes, as was the case in the beginning of the resistance to the tyranny of Charles I., [should be] formally contested by an overwhelming multitude of defendants before the courts of common law."

So the subtlety of lawyers should be confounded by the subtlety of the law. "The nation would thus be excited to develop itself, and to declare whether it acquiesced in the existing forms of Government. The manner in which all questions of this nature might be decided, would develop the occasions and afford a prognostic as to the success of more decisive measures. Simultaneously with this active and vigilant spirit of opposition, means ought to be taken of solemnly conveying the sense of large bodies and various denominations of the people in a manner the most explicit to the existing depositories of power. The system of petitioning, but couched in the actual language of the petitioners and emanating from distinct assemblies, ought to load the tables of the House of Commons." Further, men of letters, artists, men of science ought to remonstrate, and their memorials and petitions might show the degrees of conviction they entertain of the inevitable connection

* Probably Shelley thought of the editors of *The Examiner*, John and Leigh Hunt.

between freedom and the cultivation of the imagination, the cultivation of scientific truth, and the development of morals and metaphysical inquiry. "Suppose these memorials to be severally written by Godwin, and Hazlitt, and Bentham,* and Hunt, they would be worthy of the age and of the cause, and like the meridian sun, would strike all but the eagles who dared to gaze upon its beams with blindness and confusion. These appeals of solemn and emphatic argument from those who have already a predestined existence among posterity would appal the enemies of mankind by their echoes from every corner of the world in which the majestic literature of England is cultivated. It would be like a voice from beyond the dead of those who will live in the memories of men when they must be forgotten; it would be eternity warning time."

At this stage of the progress of reform it is probable that the strength of the national will would be felt, and would be acknowledged by the reluctant concession of some limited portion of their rights to the people. "In this case the people ought to be exhorted by everything dear to them to pause, until by the exercise of those rights which they have regained, they become fitted to demand more." It is better that we should gain what we demand by a process of negotiation which would occupy twenty years than that we should do anything which might tend towards civil war. If, however, our rulers are hopelessly perverse and blind, if they "consider the chance of personal ruin and the infamy of figuring

* *Lord Byron* was first written, then was cancelled, and *Bentham* written in its place.

on the page of history as the promoters of civil war preferable to resigning any portion, how small soever, of their usurped authority, we are to recollect that we possess a right beyond remonstrance. It has been acknowledged by the most approved writers on the English Constitution that we possess a right of resistance. The claim of the reigning family is founded upon a memorable execution of this solemnly recorded right. The last resort of resistance is undoubtedly insurrection. The right of insurrection is derived from the employment of armed force to counteract the will of the nation. Let the Government disband the standing army, and the purpose of resistance would be sufficiently fulfilled by the incessant agitation of the points of dispute before the courts of common law, and by an unwarlike display of the irresistible number and union of the people."

Before entering on a consideration of the measures which might terminate in civil war, Shelley briefly considers the nature and the consequences of war. There is a secret sympathy between destruction and power, between monarchy and war, and the history of all recorded time teaches us with what success they have played into each other's hands.

"War is a kind of superstition; the parade of arms and badges corrupts the imagination of men. How far more appropriate would be the symbols of an inconsolable grief, muffled drums, and melancholy music, and arms reversed, the livery of sorrow. When men mourn at funerals, for what do they mourn in comparison with the calamities which they hasten with all circumstance of festivity to suffer and to inflict? Visit in imagination the scene of a field of battle or a city taken by assault. Collect we into one group the groans and the distortions of the innumerable dying, the inconsolable grief and horror of their sorrowing friends, the hellish exulta-

tion and unnatural drunkenness of destruction of the conquerors, the burning of the harvests, and the obliteration of the traces of cultivation. To this in civil war is to be added the sudden disruption of the bonds of social life, and 'father against son.' If there had never been war there could never have been tyranny in the world. Tyrants take advantage of the mechanical organization of armies to establish and defend their encroachments. It is thus that the mighty advantages of the French Revolution have been almost compensated by a succession of tyrants; for demagogues, oligarchies, usurpers, and legitimate kings are merely varieties of the same class from Robespierre to Louis XVIII."

But the greatest evil resulting from war is that it creates a sentiment in favour of brute force, and diminishes our faith in moral influences.

"War waged from whatever motive extinguishes the sentiment of reason and justice in the mind. The motive is forgotten or only adverted to in a mechanical and habitual manner. A sentiment of confidence in brute force and in a contempt of death and danger is considered as the highest virtue, when in truth, however indispensable to [virtue], they are merely the means and the instruments highly capable of being perverted to destroy the cause they were assumed to promote. It is a foppery the most intolerable to an amiable and philosophical mind. It is like what some reasoners have observed of religious faith—no fallacious and indirect motive to action can subsist in the mind without weakening the effect of those which are genuine and true. The person who thinks it virtuous to believe, will think a less degree of virtue attaches to good actions than if he had considered it indifferent. The person who has been accustomed to subdue men by force will be less inclined to the trouble of convincing or persuading them."

These considerations may make the true friend of mankind pause before he recommends measures tending towards the grievous calamity of war. "I imagine, however," adds Shelley, "that before the English nation shall arrive at that point of moral and political degradation now occupied by the Chinese, it will be necessary to appeal to an exertion of physical strength."

Here we have almost reached the end of the manuscript. A blank space of two leaves is left, and in the sentences of the last fragment Shelley contemplates the future victory of the people and the duties which accompany that victory.

"When the people shall have obtained by whatever means the victory over their oppressors, and when persons appointed by them shall have taken their seats in the Representative assembly of the nation, and assumed the control of public affairs according to constitutional rules, then will remain the great task of accommodating all that can be preserved of ancient forms with the improvements of the knowledge of a more enlightened age in legislation, jurisprudence, government, and religious and academical institutions. The settlement of the National Debt is, on the principles before elucidated, merely an affair of form, and however necessary and important, is an affair of mere arithmetical proportions readily determined; nor can I see how those who, being deprived of their unjust advantages, will probably inwardly murmur, can oppose one word of open expostulation to a measure of such irrefragable justice. There is one thing, which vulgar agitators endeavour to flatter the most uneducated part of the people by assiduously proposing, which they ought not to do nor to require—and that is Retribution.

"Men having been injured desire to injure in return. This is falsely called an universal law of human nature; it is a law from which many are exempt, and all in proportion to their virtue and cultivation. The savage is more revengeful than the civilised man, the ignorant and uneducated than the person of a refined and cultivated intellect, the generous and——"

With which unfinished sentence the "Philosophical View of Reform" ends. It could close with no more sacred thought or word than that of reconciliation—"word over all, beautiful as the sky."

LAST WORDS ON SHELLEY.

SOME critics of my "Life of Shelley," the reviewers, if I remember rightly, in *The Times*, the *Athenæum*, and the *Quarterly Review*, noticed with some surprise or regret the fact that I nowhere attempted to give a general view or estimate—a "synthesis" as one of them called it—of Shelley's character, and genius, and work in literature. My reserve in this respect was of course not the result of accident; I felt, and still feel, that such deliberate reserve was right and wise. The writer of a short study may legitimately present a view in which generalisation has done its full work; he may reduce what is complex to a simple conception, and arrange a mass of various details under some dominant idea. But such ought not to be the procedure of a biographer, certainly not of a biographer whose aim is to paint a portrait, following at however great a distance those masters who have painted portraits in the great style. His synthesis must be implicit, and if it be present everywhere in a vital way, he will do well to leave it so, and allow others, if they please, to make it explicit. His general conception guides and governs his work from first to last, but at each moment he seems wholly occupied with the endeavour to set down faithfully the colours and the lines which he sees while his eyes are fixed upon some part of the object before him. It is

his desire to show a living creature and not an abstraction of the intellect; to display the opal with all its mingling hues, its luminous shadows, and cloudy brightnesses; to paint the pigeon's neck and all its shifting dyes, changeful with every stir of life. For the interpretation of human character an anecdote may be more valuable than a theory. Dead facts on the one hand and abstract ideas on the other are the Scylla and Charybdis of the biographer; between them lies his difficult way, in the flow of reality and living truth.

I had, to be sure, my own notion of Shelley, but whether it be philosophical enough to deserve the name of a synthesis I cannot say; it certainly had its origin in no partial survey or incomplete analysis of the facts. I thought of Shelley—so we all think of him—as a man of extraordinary sensitiveness and susceptibility, susceptibility above all to ideal impressions; and I further thought of him as instinctively craving something to balance his own excessive sensitiveness, something to control his mobility of feeling, something to steady his advance and give him poise. A law he needed, but a law which should steady his advance, not one which should trammel it or hold him in motionless equilibrium. Coming at a time when the ideas of the Revolution were in the air, he found what served him as a law in those ideas, as declared by their most eminent English spokesman, William Godwin. A lyrical nature attempting to steady its advance by the revolutionary abstractions—such was Shelley. And his work in literature represents on the one hand his own mobile temperament, his extraordinary sensitiveness and

marvellous imagination, and on the other hand the *zeit-geist*, the spirit of 1789, as formulated by Godwin in a code of morals, rigid, passionless, and doctrinaire, yet containing a hidden fire, and glowing inwardly with ardent anticipations. The volumes of "Political Justice" were thus for Shelley at once a law and a gospel.

By his temperament and constitution Shelley was little disposed to acquiesce in traditional and conventional ways of thought, presented to him, as these were in his own household, in a fashion which lacked real charm and inspiration. There lay in his instinctive feelings enough that was peculiar or singular to draw his understanding sideways from the paths of use and wont. What attracts the average boy did not attract Shelley; and when his feelings were driven into opposition, it was natural and indeed inevitable, that his intellect should go hand in hand with his feelings to interpret and justify them. Persecuted by the swarm of young marauders at Eton, he was driven in upon himself. Loosened from the moorings of traditional belief, if he ever had such moorings, he was prepared to accept a new gospel, and precisely at this moment Godwin's remarkable book fell into his hands. Many of us probably could tell, each from his own experience, how some one author or some one book, coming to us at a fortunate moment in youth, has been a key to unlock for us the mysteries of existence; how it has been to us the revelation sole and single of wisdom; how it has fed our highest feelings and shaped our desires and our resolves. Some of us have found in Wordsworth such a master, some perhaps in Carlyle, or Goethe, or Browning, or Newman, or George

Eliot, or Emerson, or Comte; and even when the hours of single-hearted devotion have passed and we come under other influences and wander hither and thither, we yet cherish a peculiar gratitude, a loyalty, a piety towards him who was the inspirer and master of our youth. Such a master and inspirer Shelley found in the author of "Political Justice."

Wherein lay the extraordinary attraction of Godwin's philosophy for Shelley? No two men could be less like each other than the sensitive, enthusiastic disciple, and the elderly philosopher who had schooled his temperate feelings, as far as might be, into a monotony of calm. How was it that Godwin came to wield a tyrannous power over Shelley's understanding? The answer is that Godwin's philosophy brought to Shelley something which his imagination demanded, and something which was needful to his character. Godwin with his abstract principles made a clean sweep of tradition and all the accumulated treasures and all the accumulated lumber of the past; these same principles, viewed as the foundation of a new human society, authorised boundless hopes for the future. It suited Shelley's imagination to have an open space, a vast clearing wherein to erect its visionary splendours, a vacant heaven wherein to build the palaces of cloudland. But besides this, the fact that Shelley experienced all the troubles of an eager, never-satisfied heart, predisposed him to accept as a counterpoise to his own disturbing passions a philosophy so strict in its ideal of duty, so free from the riot of temperament and the consequent relapse into depression, as was the doctrinaire system of Godwin. Nothing is

expressed more frequently or more forcibly in Shelley's poetry than his ecstacy in the approach and his anguish in the passing of delight. The flux and vicissitude of emotion is the ever-recurring subject of his song. We are as clouds "that speed and gleam and quiver" across the midnight moon, and soon night closes round and they are lost. We are as lyres—

> "Whose dissonant strings
> Give various response to each varying blast,
> To whose frail frame no second motion brings
> One mood or modulation like the last."

In the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" it is the thought of the sudden apparition and then the sudden withdrawal of the ideal light which gladdens and saddens the poet's heart. Now Godwin's philosophy, while on the one hand it was a chariot from which Shelley's wild-eyed hopes could lean forward to drink the wind of their own speed, was on the other hand an intellectual counterpoise to his excitable temperament. It seemed to give fixity, or at least the calm of a sublime law, to the flux of circumstance and the tumult of passions. It was a doctrine of the reason, a code of duty, and at the same time an evangel of hope. What more or what better could Shelley desire than a creed which, while it gave larger scope and range to the emotions, brought them under a glorious law, and delivered them from the pain and passion of all merely egoistic or personal feeling?

And Shelley did in truth find something to steady him in Godwin's philosophy; it became a kind of pole-star, lending a guidance to his erratic course. To it

and to his ideals he continued in essentials true through all the years of his life, if inconstant in not a few of his affections and admirations. This was not wholly ill for Shelley. But how much better it were if instead of throwing himself for support and sustenance on a system of abstract doctrines, he had thrown himself upon the facts of life and tried to get into close and fruitful relation with reality. Such a rigid, doctrinaire system of thought as that of Godwin tends as much as anything can to seclude one from the direct and faithful teaching of experience. And how dull and clumsy a teacher is the closet philosopher when compared with that infinitely quick and subtle doctor, life! Throw yourself upon life, and you are touched by truth on every side and in the finest ways. View life through the loopholes of a philosophic fortress, and you get at best certain gross and obvious lessons of wisdom. These abstractions have a rigidity about them which will not allow them to work cunningly into character. How fortunate it is when an emotional and imaginative nature can steady itself by the slow discipline of reality rather than by the clumsy support of certain abstractions, half of which perhaps are rotten props! This wiser way was Shakspere's and was not Shelley's. But through his quick sympathies and through a few trumpet-tongued utterances of life the truths of human existence did in fact reach Shelley; in spite of Godwin's theories, which hedged him in, the pain and the joy of events and of living relations with men and women touched him and by degrees matured his mind.

Mr Leslie Stephen has traced some of the effects pro-

duced by Godwin's philosophy on Shelley's imaginative creations. The fact of Godwin's influence was noticed long since. In an early review of Shelley's poetry which has hitherto escaped notice, one published during his lifetime in an obscure and short-lived journal,* the fact is commented on with considerable ability, and from a hostile point of view.

"It does not strike us as a task by any means difficult to colour the cold speculations of Godwin with the language of poetry, though we think such subjects would be avoided by a poetical mind. That a state of society may be imagined in which men will be 'kingless, and tribeless, and nationless,' we admit, and even feel that the conception has an imposing and sublime appearance, in the same way that the idea of utter desolation is sublime; but we must remember that these notions are put forward by Mr Shelley with avowed admiration of the consequences he expects to result from their being applied to the test of experience. Now we must continue to believe that such views are likely to lessen the exercise of the domestic charities; that when no adequate object is offered to the affections, they will, being left without support, droop and die in the heart. We believe that man's duty here is something different from comparing phantoms with phantoms; and that whatever his talents, or whatever his professed object may be, no man is justified in giving to the world wild and crude notions, the first effect of which, if reduced to practice, would be the overthrow of all existing institutions and the substitution of a waste and howling wilderness—the revolutionary Eden, of which the uncontrolled passions of men are to be protecting angels."

The objections to Shelley's poetical interpretation of Godwin's doctrines could hardly be better expressed in few words by a determined adversary. Mr Leslie Stephen has drawn out the indictment at length. But I am not aware that any one has shown, though it has been often referred to, how powerfully Godwin's book,

* "Critical Remarks on Shelly's (*sic*) Poetry," in the *Dublin Magazine*, vol. ii. (July—December, 1820) p. 393.

"Political Justice," influenced Shelley's life and conduct. No one can understand aright either Shelley's poetry or his life who has not formed some acquaintance with the master's teaching so faithfully translated by the disciple into action and into song.

The words "political justice" express a great tendency, and in some respects an admirable tendency of the Revolution and revolutionary thinkers. It means that politics, and in general the dealings of men with one another, should be regulated not by a shallow expediency but by the deeper expediency of justice; it means that politics and the social order should be moralised. But what is morality? With Godwin it is simply the application of reason to life. We bring with us into the world, according to Godwin, no rule of right, no innate ideas, no tendencies to good or evil. If we learn the truth we shall certainly do the right; we cannot but yield to the force of the stronger argument. If ever we do evil, it is because our knowledge is imperfect or because there is a fallacy in our logic. Morality in a high sense is possible for him alone who has a wide perception of truth and a fully enlightened understanding. And in proportion to a man's enlightenment he must of necessity be virtuous, because he comes under the influence of motives which leave him no choice but to act aright. Error and ignorance are the sources of all vice; vice, indeed, is but a form of error, and virtue is merely knowledge transformed into act. The first duty, therefore, of one who is himself a virtuous being and desires to make other men good must be to wage war by argument against ignorance, prejudice, and

error, and to spread by all fair means a knowledge of the truth.

Imagine such ideas as these coming into contact with the mind of a boy of fervid temper, and possessed of considerable argumentative ability. They would forthwith transform him into an intellectual combatant, a militant young apostle. He must instantly address himself to attack the prejudices and ignorances of his fellows and to gain converts for the truth. If the victim of prejudice happen to be some fair being of another sex than his own, the task of dissipating her cloud of error may be at once an act of virtue and an exquisite delight. But even the head of a collegiate house or a bishop on the bench, though deeply benighted in ignorance, is not unworthy of enlightenment, and the mistaken man must at last yield to the stress of triumphant logic. When Shelley became a propagandist of ideas at Eton, when he entered into what he styled a "polemical correspondence" with Felicia Browne, or Harriet Grove, or Harriet Westbrook, or Elizabeth Hitchener, when he assailed this or that clerical stranger with sceptical argument, when he distributed the Oxford pamphlet which led to his expulsion from University College, he was only acting out, according to his lights, the first principles of "Political Justice."

Many are the errors and prejudices of mankind, but, according to Godwin, the two giant impostures which have demoralised the human race are religion and government. "Error is principally indebted for its permanence to social institution." Political government is "that brute engine which has been the only perennial

cause of the vices of mankind." "We cannot hesitate to conclude universally that law is an institution of the most pernicious tendency." Religion is "in all its parts an accommodation to the prejudices and weaknesses of mankind," and therefore it exists by its sufferance of vice. We are forbidden by true philosophy to indulge wrath or indignation against any human creature, for all act necessarily, and no one can be other than he is; but if it were permitted us to be enraged, we might indeed feel a boundless rage against kings and priests. In general the idea of authority, whether temporal or spiritual, was abhorrent to Godwin; virtue is the recognition of reason in all our thoughts, words, and deeds, and if we substitute authority for reason we lapse from virtue and expose ourselves to every possibility of wrong-doing. To war against authority as such is therefore a duty of the virtuous man.

It is only surprising that Shelley, inspired by such ideas, boy as he was and full of impetuosity, did not dash himself more violently against the rule and order of society. The conviction, derived also from Godwin, that the advance of men towards perfection is a long and a slow process, came to temper his extravagance of hope and desire. Perhaps at the present day we are likely to do some injustice to Shelley viewed as the militant champion of ideas. We have been so much occupied with the natural history of human beliefs, we have come to accept so fully the doctrine that every creed and every form of society corresponds with some general condition of the human mind, and is a natural product, as we say, of the organism and its environment,

that we find absolute truth nowhere, and nowhere absolute falsehood. And so we recognise each form of belief as natural in its time and place, and find it almost impossible to make a relentless, unqualified attack on any widespread faith. But such was not the revolutionary point of view. Shelley, with Godwin for his guide, viewed all beliefs from the dogmatic standpoint of the reason. In "Political Justice" he had found truth absolute; the popular beliefs were superstitions more or less gross, but all untrue; and since truth and knowledge are the sources of virtue, and ignorance and error are of the nature of vice, the young champion was urged forward by his highest thoughts and purest feelings to do battle against the darkness that lay around.

The philosophical system of Godwin, while it cuts at the roots of all natural piety, could have no attraction for one who was low-thoughted or a mere lover of self. Its seductive power lay in the fact that it set up a standard of duty far loftier and far stricter than that recognised by the average man, while at the same time it sapped the instinctive religion of the heart. Self was to become nothing; reason with each of us was to be all in all. But not only was self to become nothing, filial piety, personal reverence, the bonds of friendship, the vows of love, gratitude to a benefactor, were to be transcended as unworthy of the votary of reason—or rather they were to be opposed, crushed, set at nought, for friendship, filial piety, regard to pledges and promises, gratitude, are of the nature of vice. What magic, Godwin asks, is there in the word *I*? *My* benefactor! It was my benefactor's duty to serve me, or it was not. If

it was his duty, I am under no obligation to him; but if it was not his duty, I am compelled by reason to condemn his conduct. *My* father and *my* mother! Why should the accident that a man and woman brought me into the world, possibly through no high sense of duty, nor in compliance with the dictates of reason, why should this constitute a peculiar claim on my obedience or affection? As a son I have indeed special opportunities of being useful to them, and it may be right to use those opportunities; but if my reason informs me that my services are more useful to the species when bestowed elsewhere, those services are in no sense due to my parents. Shelley viewing his father—the dull, pompous, country squire—from the standpoint of reason, could not place him high in the ranks of human beings. Why venerate one who, regarded impartially, was the reverse of venerable? As to the gratitude supposed to be due to a father, gratitude, according to the law of reason, is a vice. "I will try the force of truth on that mistaken man," wrote Shelley, with a magnanimous sense of superiority to a father who was not a votary of reason. And having on one occasion tried its force, he found that his father's arguments were "equine"—those of a headstrong horse. Why venerate an old horse? It is to the credit of Shelley's nature that in spite of the teaching of "Political Justice" his letters to his father were in general respectful, courteous, and conciliating.

Shelley's seeming tolerance of vice has surprised and shocked some persons who gladly do honour to his genius. Not many weeks after his marriage his closest friend made an attempt to mislead the child-wife,

Harriet, during her husband's absence. A breach of friendship naturally ensued. But a few months pass; the parted comrades meet in London; Shelley with no difficulty restores the wrongdoer to his regard and reintroduces him to Harriet. Again, late in life Shelley was informed by Byron of certain monstrous accusations brought against him. The charge of cruelty shocked him and called forth an outbreak of indignation; but he speaks, and that in a letter to his wife, of infidelity to the marriage bond as though it were no crime but at worst an "error." In these instances Shelley merely acted and spoke as a faithful disciple of the master who had taught him, as he says, all of virtue and of knowledge. For what is vice? It is, according to Godwin, no more than an intellectual error, a mistaken calculation of consequences. To feel indignant with one who commits a crime is in the highest degree unreasonable. The criminal acted according to the preponderance of motives at the moment of the deed, and he could not have acted otherwise. "The assassin cannot help the murder he commits any more than the dagger." * Had the motives been presented to him aright he must needs have acted virtuously. Godwin admits that for the sake of convenience he has not adopted throughout his treatise the language of the doctrine of necessity; but Shelley was more consistent. If the wrongdoer towards Harriet at York should have escaped from the "prejudice" which misled him, Shelley could gladly take him to his heart again. And it was strictly in accordance with the teaching of "Political Justice" that he should speak of

* "Political Justice," book vii., chap. 1.

conjugal infidelity and the alleged seduction of an intimate friend as an "error," *error* being the Godwinian term for what we unphilosophical speakers name vice and crime.

That his natural sense of what is right should be sapped by a philosophy so crude as that of Godwin may seem to indicate that there was something wrong with Shelley's heart or his intellect. But in truth the doctrine was specious in its sophistry; it gained the enthusiastic devotion of Wordsworth and Coleridge for a time in their earlier days; it represented all the high hopes and pure enthusiasm of the dawn of the French Revolution. New truths and new and noble ardours were allied with the revolutionary errors. Shelley's best and purest feelings connected themselves with the teaching of Godwin. It is easy to understand how a youth of high moral and social aim might come to believe in the evil days of the Regency that the special need of England was to oppose the existing order of things and to sustain the better and purer spirit of the great movement inaugurated in France. Shelley was not himself in any distinguished degree an original thinker. He accepted with the enthusiasm of a poet doctrines which seemed to him to contain the hope and promise of the future of the human race; he animated those doctrines with the emotional ardour of his own spirit, and gave them form and colour by the creative power of his imagination.

And here I would say a few words on the subject of Shelley's separation from his first wife, which most persons regard, and regard justly, as a central point in

his life, and one which must go far to determine our estimate of his character. Some of the critics of my "Life of Shelley" seem to consider that I did not pronounce a moral judgment on this passage of Shelley's story with sufficient firmness. But a biographer's first duty is to trace the history of a human being as far as possible from within: to follow the involved windings of the stream of life, to go with it through the difficult rapids, and to do this, if possible, with skilled courage. While he must never confound moral distinctions or practise the sophistry of refining away the plain difference between right and wrong, the biographer will do wisely to avoid the didactic attitude; he will do wisely to practise some reserve in pronouncing such moral judgments as are pronounced from a pulpit or a platform. The living moral law must be present in the truth of his story; it must be part of the natural history, part of the physiology of his book; and if it be this no more is needed. We know too little of the facts of the six months which ended with the final rupture between Shelley and his wife to warrant much moral hard hitting. I could not indulge in hard hitting, because a sense of right and justice restrained me, and because I felt that only a part of the case was known to me. But what is undoubtedly a portion of the truth would have lived more actively in my story if I had shown more fully and clearly how Godwin's teaching in "Political Justice" had prepared a way for the catastrophe.

"Delicacy forbids me to say more," Shelley wrote at a later time and on a solemn occasion, "than that we were disunited by incurable dissensions." Dissensions

between husband and wife unhappily are not of such rare occurrence that we can look on them as very extraordinary in the case of Shelley and Harriet. But in general, although relations may be strained, there is a binding and restraining force in duty or religion or regard for the opinion of society, or in mature age, which prevents the resort to extreme measures, and things settle down into a kind of discomfortable calm, or perhaps an armed neutrality. The centrifugal forces are there, but the centripetal forces are in some degree more powerful and overcome them.

Now what centripetal forces existed in the case of Shelley? Encouraged by the volume which had taught him all of virtue, he had trained himself to set the opinion of society at defiance. The binding force of religion was, of course, entirely lacking. The restraining influence of mature age in his case did not exist. A certain sense of duty he had indeed, for he was not altogether a doctrinaire philosopher, and he could not but feel the rending of those ties which bind together a husband and wife who have lived in mutual affection during two years. And we know that he pleaded piteously, almost despairingly, with Harriet for a restoration of her love. But the centripetal forces were weak in comparison with the centrifugal, and when Shelley found his own heart drawn a different way, and persuaded himself that his wife had transferred her affections from himself to another, what influence remained to hold husband and wife together? The marriage vow was less than a rope of sand or twist of straw. A promise or vow, according to Godwin, is

of the nature of vice, because it binds our future conduct by an artificial rule, whereas our conduct at every moment of our lives ought to be governed by reason, and by reason alone. It is positively vicious —so Shelley learnt from "Political Justice"—for husband and wife to remain united after the union has ceased to contribute to their common happiness.

"It is absurd," Godwin wrote, "to expect that the inclinations and wishes of two human beings should coincide through any long period of time. To oblige them to act and to live together is to subject them to some inevitable portion of thwarting, bickering, and unhappiness. . . . The supposition that I must have a companion for life is the result of a complication of vices. It is the dictate of cowardice, and not of fortitude. . . . The habit is for a thoughtless and romantic youth of each sex to come together, to see each other for a few times and under circumstances full of delusion, and then to vow to each other eternal attachment. What is the consequence of this? In almost every instance they find themselves deceived. . . . The institution of marriage is a system of fraud, and men who carefully mislead their judgments in the daily affair of their life must always have a crippled judgment in every other concern. . . . Marriage is law, and the worst of laws. . . . So long as two human beings are forbidden to follow the dictates of their own mind, prejudice is alive and vigorous. So long as I seek to engross one woman to myself, and to prohibit my neighbour from proving his superior desert and reaping the fruits of it, I am guilty of the most odious of monopolies."

In the future millennium as imagined by Godwin, men upon this earth will be immortal, for mind will have gained a complete conquest over matter, and the race of immortals will cease to propagate the species; but long before that golden age a state far happier than the present will have been attained, when at each moment free man or free woman may at pleasure elect his or her own partner; when the father of each individual child will be

unknown, and surnames will have been abolished. Can we wonder that the youth Shelley, who had drunk with eagerness these Godwinian tidings of great joy, should think scorn of the old plain law honoured in the homes of England?

Yet Godwin's influence on Shelley was by no means wholly for evil, and Shelley's life and work, which exhibit all the errors of the revolutionary epoch, exhibit also the better spirit of the time. "Beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain"—so he is described by Mr Matthew Arnold. "The real is the true world for a great poet, but it was not Shelley's world"—so the late Professor of Poetry at Oxford, Principal Shairp, pronounced judgment. "Cast Shelley at once aside as shallow and verbose," says Mr Ruskin. These are names of high authority, but we may pause a moment before accepting the utterances as true. For my own part I feel that some of the visions which Shelley's poetry conjures up as I read it, are but phantoms, showing thin and ghostlike indeed when I turn from them to the men and women of Shakspere's plays or Scott's novels. In one of his most beautiful sonnets, Wordsworth tells how on the evening of a day memorable to him—the day of his marriage—he and his bride beheld in the scenery of the clouds a wonderful pageant; Indian citadel, Grecian temple, minster and bell-tower, islands and groves and seas visibly exprest in the western heavens. But, says Wordsworth, we felt the while we should forget them:

> "They are of the sky,
> And from our earthly memory fade awa

So I sometimes feel when gazing at the cloud-like splendours of Shelley's verse; the splendours will die down into grey ashes of sunset, and I shall be unable to keep the memory of them alive within me.

> "They are of the sky,
> And from my earthly memory fade away."

But two reflections offer themselves to me. The first is that now and again in a hard-working day, one glance into the upper heavens at dawn, or noon, or sunset, has been the most solidly precious moment of the day, has been the *elixir vitæ* of the four-and-twenty hours, and even though it may be wholly forgotten, it has sent a pulse of exquisite sensation to mingle henceforth unconsciously with all that I do and all that I am. And, secondly, I reflect that the radiant clouds expressed the powers of the sun and of the winds which come to me all day and every day, and are a portion of my life. Idealist as he was, Shelley lived in some important respects in closer and more fruitful relation with the real world than did his great contemporary, Scott. Because he lived with ideas, he apprehended with something like prophetic insight those great forces which have been altering the face of the world during this nineteenth century, and which we sum up under the names of democracy and science; and he apprehended them not from the merely material point of view, but from that of a spiritual being, uniting in his vision with democracy and science a third element not easy to name or to define, an element of spirituality which has been most potent in the higher thought and feeling of our time. Many strange phantasies had Shelley, but no

phantasy quite so remote from reality as that of building himself a mock feudal castle, or of living in a world half made up of the modern pseudo-antique. Many strange phantasies he had, but none so strange as phantasies of later date; none so strange as that of reviving the faith of the twelfth century in English brains to-day; none so feebly wild as that of drawing a curtain of worn-out shreds to hide the risen sun of science. As regards science, it is obvious enough that Shelley possessed in no degree the scientific intellect. He was far from being able to contribute to science such anticipations of imaginative genius as those which make the name of Goethe illustrious in botany and comparative anatomy. But Shelley expressed a poet's faith in science and a poet's hopes. Wordsworth, incomparably a greater thinker than Shelley, expressed a poet's fears—fears by no means wholly unjustified—that the pursuit of analytic investigation in things material might dull the eye for what is vital and spiritual in nature and in man. Wordsworth recognised a part of the fact, but Shelley's feelings attached themselves to the more important side of truth in this matter. "Beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." No, not in the void, but amid the prime forces of the modern world; and this ineffectual angel was one of the heralds of the dawn—dawn portentous, it may be, but assuredly real. I recognise in Shelley all the illusions and sophisms of the revolutionary epoch. I recognise the vagueness of much of his humanitarian rhetoric. But humanitarian rhetoric sometimes may be practical beneficence in a nebulous state; let it condense and

solidify, and the luminous mist becomes an orb of love—the stout heart of one who would serve the needy and the downcast of our race. If love, justice, hope, freedom, fraternity, be real, then so is the wiser part of the inspiration of Shelley's radiant song.

If, then, Shelley did not hover ineffectually in the void, may we not attempt to define his historical position in our literature? Perhaps it is not rash to assert that when this century of ours is viewed from a point in the distant future, it will be seen that among many great facts of the century the largest and most important are those expressed by the words democracy and science. And what, if we should sum it up in one word, is the leading idea given by democracy to literature? In mediæval times the heroes on whom imagination fixed its gaze were two, the chivalric knight and the ascetic saint—great and admirable figures. With us the hero is, if you please, no hero at all, but simply the average man. For him we think and toil; our most earnest hopes and wishes are for him. Or, since after all we want a hero, let us say, instead of "the average man," the race, or humanity. And now what, expressed in a single word, is the ruling idea of science? What word can we choose except the great and venerable word, law? Here, then, are two eminent words of our century—the race, or humanity, given to us by democracy; law, given to us by science. Let us connect the two, and we obtain the expression "humanity subject to law"—that is, we have the conception of human progress or evolution. Hence this phrase "progress of humanity," however it may have been spoilt for dainty lips by cheap and vulgar

trumpeting, and however we may recognise the fact that for a day or a year, or a group of years, the world's advance may halt on palsied feet—this word, this idea, this faith has had for our age something like the force of a religion. And as the inspiring faith of our century has been this faith in the progress or evolution of man, so its heresy has been the heresy of pessimism; and in literature, side by side with the stronger poetry of hope, there has been a feebler poetry of despair.

In the earlier years of our century the democratic movement concerned itself too exclusively with the individual and his rights, and regarded too little his duties, affections, and privileges as a member of society. It is greatly to the advantage of Shelley's work as a poet, and greatly to his credit as a man, that he assigns to love, that which links us to our fellows, some of the power and authority which Godwin ascribes to reason alone.* The French Revolution had been in a great measure a destruction of the ancient order of society, and such poetry as that of Byron, sympathising with the revolution, is too reckless an assertion of individual freedom. Shelley was deeply infected with the same errors. But it is part of the glory of his poetry that in some degree he anticipated the sentiment of this second half of our century, when we desire more to construct or reconstruct than to destroy. Shelley's ideas of a reconstruction of society are indeed often vague or visionary; but there is always present in his poetry the sentiment or feeling

* Godwin, however, it may be noted, desired to banish from philosophy the phrase, "rights of man." *Claims* he would allow, but never *rights*.

which tends to reconstruction, the feeling of love; and the word "fraternity" is for him at least as potent as the word "liberty." In Byron we find an expression of the revolution on its negative side; in Shelley we find this, but also an expression of the revolution on its positive side. As the wave of revolution rolls onward, driven forth from the vast volcanic upheaval in France, and as it becomes a portion of the literary movement of Great Britain, its dark and hissing crest may be the poetry of Byron; but over the tumultuous wave hangs an iris of beauty and promise, and that foam-bow of hope, flashing and failing, and ever reappearing as the wave sweeps on, is the poetry of Shelley.

There is a kind of wisdom, and a very precious kind, of which we find singularly little in Shelley's poetry. The wisdom of common sense, which enables us to steer our way amid the rocks and shoals of life; the wisdom of large benignant humour; the wisdom of the ripened fruits of experience; the wisdom of those axioms intermediate between first principles and practical details—those *axiomata media* which in science Bacon regards as so important; to utter such wisdom in verse was not Shelley's province. But there is another wisdom which the world sometimes counts as folly—that which consists in devotion at all hazards to an ideal, to what stands with us for highest truth, sacred justice, purest love. And assuredly the tendency of Shelley's poetry, however we may venerate ideals other than his, is to quicken the sense that there is such an exalted wisdom as this, and to stimulate us to its pursuit.

Whether we speak of the poet as an inspirer of wis-

dom, or as one who enlarges and purifies our feelings, or as one who widens the scope of our imagination, we dare not claim for him the title of a great poet unless he has enriched human life and aided men in some way to become better or less incomplete and fragmentary creatures. If Shelley has done this, we may disregard such words as those of Mr Ruskin and Principal Shairp. Let us ask then, "How has Shelley made life better for each of us?" bearing in mind, while we put the question, that only a small part of the full and true answer can find its way into a definite statement. At least we can say this, he helps us to conceive more nobly of nature and more nobly of man. We come through his poetry to feel more vividly the quick influencings which pass from the beauty and splendour and terror of the external world into these spirits of ours. He helps us to lie more open to the joy and sadness of the earth and skies. Who has felt the breath of the autumnal west wind without a sense of its large life and strength and purity, made ampler and more vivid by what Shelley's great ode has contributed to his imagination? Or who has heard the song of the lark in mid-heaven, and not felt how that atom of intense joy above us rebukes our distrust of nature and of life and all our dull despondencies, and feeling this has not remembered that Shelley once helped to interpret for him the rapture of the bird? And though no words of man can make more glorious the spectacle of the midnight heavens, who does not feel in such stanzas as those which begin with the lines—

> "Palace-roof of cloudless nights,
> Paradise of golden lights
> Deep, immeasurable, vast,"

a clarion-cry rousing the imagination and inspiring it with *élan* for that advance which is needful before we can apprehend the splendour and the awful beauty that encircle us?

So Shelley has helped us to feel the glory of external nature, making life a better thing for each of us; and in like manner he quickens within us a sense of the possibilities of greatness and goodness hidden in man and woman. Let us recognise to the full the philosophical errors in the doctrine which lies behind the poetry of the "Prometheus Unbound," the false conception of evil as residing in external powers rather than in man's heart and will, the false ideal of the human society of the future; and recognising these, let us acknowledge that the poem has helped us to conceive more truly and more nobly of the possibilities of man's life, its possibilities of fortitude, endurance, pitying sympathy, heroic martyrdom, aspiration, joy, freedom, love. No poet has more truly conceived, or more vividly presented in words a sense of the measureless importance of one human spirit to another—of the master to the disciple, of the spiritual leader to his followers, of man to woman and woman to man. With a quickened sense of the infinite significance of the relations possible with our fellows, our entire feeling for life and for the virtues which hide in it, more marvellous than the occult virtues of gems, is purified and exalted. Especially has Shelley taught us to recognise the blessedness—blessedness in joy or in anguish—of the higher rule imposed on dedicated spirits, who live for a cause or an idea, a charity or a hope, and for its sake are willing to endure shame and reproach,

and a death of martyrdom. But this higher rule, as conceived by Shelley, is not one of voluntary self-mortification or ignoble asceticism; he does honour in verse and prose to music, sculpture, painting, poetry, and quickens our sense of the spiritual power of each. Yet he never settles down to browse with Epicurean satisfaction in any paddock of beauty or pleasure. We are touched through his poetry with a certain divine discontent, so that not music, nor sculpture, nor picture, nor song, can wholly satisfy our spirits; but in and through these we reach after some higher beauty, some divine goodness, which we may not attain, yet towards which we must perpetually aspire. And who has heartened us more than Shelley, amid all his errors, to love freedom, to hope all things, to endure all things, and even while the gloom gathers to have faith in the dawn of light? Who has done more to quicken and refine our sympathy with suffering creatures? to assure us that among the despised and rejected things of the world true goodness dwells, so that even the snake may be in truth a defeated angel in disguise? And who has more powerfully impressed us with the conviction that revenge and reprisals are bitter fruits of the spirit of wrath and pride, and that evil can best be overcome by returning good for evil? From whom do we learn more effectively the duty of loyalty to our convictions, and the duty, imposed upon us at times, to fling out our highest belief as a factor to do its work in the world? And if Shelley rouses within us the spirit that makes us nonconformist (and I, for my part, have a deep reverence for reasonable nonconformity), who has given us a more graceful

example than he, in his happier moments, of that rare thing, a nonconformist who is not sour-faced but amiable and gentle?

But in many respects the truth seen by Shelley was seen as broken lights in an imperfect vision. His ideals were in part false ideals. He never quite escaped from the individualism of Godwin's system of thought. When we say, then, that Shelley possessed the wisdom of devotion to the ideal, we must qualify the statement by adding that his so-called ideal was in part no true ideal, but the spurious ideal of a phantast. For what is the good of using the splendid words "truth," "justice," "charity," if the words are used to describe something other than the realities they ought to stand for? These exalted words are wrested in revolutionary times away from their honest sense; they are made a specious veil behind which acts of injustice and cruelty are freely perpetrated. I do not believe that Shelley could ever have been guilty of such acts; but it is the Girondin with his fine phrases who prepares the way for the Jacobin with his atrocious deeds. Shelley's notion, expressed in the "Prometheus Unbound," that naked manhood,

> "Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,"

will remain, when all has been stripped off which humanity has painfully acquired during the ages, is the pseudo-ideal of a Rousseau turned topsy-turvy, or rather of a Rousseau who has turned right-about face, and who sees the fantastic golden age of simplicity, innocence, and freedom not in the past but in the future.

Here, however, I would insist on an important fact,

which has never received due attention from the students of Shelley's writings, and which goes far towards establishing his sanity as a thinker, although it indicates a weakness in his poetry. While in such poems as "The Revolt of Islam" and "Prometheus Unbound," he has imagined an ideal of the future state of society which never can be realised and which we ought not to desire, in his prose writings he often exhibits a justness of view and a moderation which have hardly obtained the recognition they deserve. The contrast between his dreams and visions as a poet, and his very moderate expectations as a practical reformer, is indeed remarkable. "Before the restraints of government are lessened, it is fit that we should lessen the necessity for them," so wrote Shelley in his "Address to the Irish People," and boy as he was, he showed himself by such words to be wiser or honester than some grey-haired counsellors of to-day. "With respect to Universal Suffrage," he wrote, "I confess I consider its adoption in the present unprepared state of public knowledge and feeling a measure fraught with peril." And again, to Leigh Hunt: "The great thing to do is to hold the balance between popular impatience and tyrannical obstinacy. . . . I am one of those whom nothing will satisfy, but who are ready to be partially satisfied in all that is practicable." Examples of Shelley's moderation in practical politics could be drawn from every period of his life, evidencing that this was the habit of his mind. His poetry is often vaporous and unreal, although the man himself had a clear perception of reality. Unfortunately the two sides of his mind—the

poetical and the practical—seldom worked together. In his verse he set forth his ideals and his visions of the remote future; he reserved his prose for dealing with what was practicable and near. It would have been better for his poetry if he could have put his whole mind into verse, as did Wordsworth. We could readily excuse a prosaic paragraph for the sake of the gain in wisdom and intellectual and moral breadth. And in truth this would, in some degree, have saved his poetry from what is most prosaic in the longer pieces, that doctrinaire background of Godwinian abstractions to which nothing will give reality or life. In one, and only one, of Shelley's longer non-dramatic poems do the two sides of his mind work harmoniously together, in "The Mask of Anarchy." Although this poem may not rank with his highest work, it enables us to understand how greatly that work would have gained had it been possible for the Shelley who saw visions to have taken counsel with the Shelley who observed and meditated on affairs. But, as he conceived, his ideals of a remote future were not without a practical use for the toilers of the day and hour. We work among petty details in a larger, wiser spirit, and with more of hope and valour and patience, if now and again we lift our eyes and behold the land that is very far off. "We derive tranquillity, and courage, and grandeur of soul," he writes, "from contemplating an object which is because we will it, and may be because we hope and desire it, and must be if succeeding generations of the enlightened, sincerely and earnestly seek it."

In what has been said I have had Shelley's larger

works chiefly in view. In his later poetry the doctrinaire element almost passes out of sight. To his finest lyrical poems, the offspring of his later years and written in Italy, the description of Mr Mill, so untrue of "The Revolt of Islam" or "Queen Mab," really applies—they are pure renderings of states of feeling, without any intellectual centres. And the feeling most frequently and most vividly expressed is that of desire in some one or other of its forms. He is, as Mr Hutton has said in his fine study of Shelley's poetical mysticism, "the *homo desideriorum;* always thirsty, always yearning; never pouring forth the strains of a thankful satisfaction, but either the cravings of an expected rapture or the agony of a severed nerve. . . . He cannot be satisfied without a *thrill* of his whole soul. He knows nothing of serene joy." Longing for the unattained or the unattainable and regret for what is passing away or lost—these feelings have rarely been expressed in verse with such delicacy and such intensity by any other poet. This has been admitted by all intelligent readers, and has been said again and again by the critics of Shelley. But it has not been sufficiently felt or perceived that over against this flux of emotion, and as if to counterpoise it, Shelley sets an ideal of faith in ideas, fortitude in adversity, stoical self-sufficiency, and mastery of the impulses of pain if not of pleasure. From his own lyrical temperament, responding to every incitement of feeling as an Æolian lyre responds to every wave of air, he seeks a refuge in the thought of heroic self-possession. Thus, in his early verses "On Death":—

"O man! hold thee on in courage of soul
Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way;
And the billows of cloud that around thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day."

And in the later sonnet on "Political Greatness":—

"Man, who man would be,
Must rule the empire of himself; in it
Must be supreme, establishing his throne
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone."

No one is more sensible to the thrill of joy or pain than Shelley's Prometheus, who yet is unvanquishable in his fortitude. When Laon, who has known all exquisite raptures of love and joy, is hurried by a raging multitude to the stake, he has even transcended the need of resolution, for the light of faith and love which shines upon a martyr illumines his heart and his countenance:—

"His cheek
Resolve has not turned pale; his eyes are mild
And calm, and, like the morn about to break,
Smile on mankind; his heart seems reconciled
To all things and itself, like a reposing child."

And it is with tranquil self-possession (rendered more lovely by one touch of poignant self-pity) that Beatrice Cenci advances to her death:—

"Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot; ay, that does well.
And yours, I see, is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another; now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well."

Shelley's poetry, says Mr Hutton, is "the poetry of desire." Yes, but here is something to go along with desire and be its counterpoise.

It is, however, fortitude in the presence of pain, and the constancy of a self-sufficing heroic soul in the midst of vicissitude which Shelley honours rather than temperance in the acceptance of delights. Of temperance we find little in his verse. He is always pining for a joy that is gone, or hungering for a rapture that is to come. Only in the last fragment written by Shelley, the admirable "Triumph of Life," does he appear fully to recognise the danger of yielding the heart intemperately to even the purest passion. In that poem Rousseau and Plato appear as victims of their own hearts: Rousseau, a ruin of manhood; Plato, who had loved more nobly, punished less cruelly, yet a captive to the triumphal car; both suffering the inevitable doom of those who are intemperate in desire and delight. But Socrates, who had known himself and tempered his heart to its object, is no chained victim in that wild career of Life the Triumpher. Thus, through desire Shelley was reaching to a calmer and saner atmosphere as his life drew towards a close.

And perhaps the influence of his lyrical poems upon his readers may be to lift them towards a like calm of mind attained through passion, or at least to purify desire and delight from all grossness, and so to lighten the task of self-control. Aristotle, in a famous passage, speaks of the effect of tragedy in purifying through terror and pity the like passions. In a similar manner the lyrical poetry of delight and desire should purify

delight and desire. From the gross throng of conflicting passions the finer are selected by the poet, are given predominance, and are themselves raised to their highest and fairest life. It is the imagination which elevates the gross passion of grief and terror caused by death into the lofty sorrow which is the most human as well as the highest grief, with all of the brute purged away. It is the imagination which elevates the passion of love between man and woman into its nobler forms, where the senses have been taken up into the spirit. So every emotion of pleasure or of pain may be made rarer, finer, more exquisite by the energy of the imagination, and to effect this is one of the highest functions of lyrical poetry. The poet feels more exquisitely than other men, and receives more impulses and intimations from the spiritual side of things. When he sings he not only relieves his own heart, he not only widens our sympathy with human emotion; he chastens and purifies our feelings, rendering them finer and more sane and permanent. The lyrical poetry of Shelley plays thus upon our feelings of delight—delight in external nature, delight in human beauty, delight in art, delight in the beauty of character and action; it plays with its refining influence still more often upon our feelings of desire and of regret. There is a rapture at once calm and impassioned which is admirably expressed in Wordsworth's earlier poetry, a rapture of which Shelley knew little. He does not train us to sober certainties of waking bliss as does Wordsworth. He is in endless pursuit of unattainable ideals, ever at the heels of the flying perfect. Although the man is poor indeed who has not something

of Wordsworth's art of sinking profoundly into the joy and peace of things, and drinking a portion of their strength and repose, I am not sure that the fittest attitude of a human creature in this our mortal life is not Shelley's attitude—the attitude of aspiration and desire. Joy is not a thing for us to rest in; joy should rather open into higher joy, light should pass into purer light; from any height or deep at which we may arrive we should still cry, "O altitudo?" to the height or deep beyond. To intensify and to purify desire is, perhaps, no less important for us than to deepen and purify satisfaction. And no one can live for a time in the lyrical poetry of Shelley without an exaltation and purification of desire.

"I can conceive Shelley if he had lived to the present time," wrote Peacock, "passing his days like Volney, looking on the world from his windows without taking part in its turmoils; and perhaps like the same or some other great apostle of liberty (for I cannot at this moment verify the quotation), desiring that nothing should be inscribed on his tomb but his name, the dates of his birth and death, and the single word *Désillusionné*." But it is he who would lie down and rest in some earthly satisfaction who will be disillusioned, not he who forever passes from desire to delight and from delight to desire, with a foot upon the ladder whose top reaches to heaven. Even in respect to political affairs I do not think that Shelley would have looked forth from his window disillusioned. A series of great events would probably have engaged his interest and aroused his imaginative ardour: first, the liberation of Greece, then the emancipation of

Catholics in Ireland, then the French Revolution of 1830, then the Reform Bill of 1832; and in 1832 Shelley would have reached his fortieth year, and his character would have gained the enduring ardour of mid-manhood. But however this may have been, I cannot conceive Shelley insensible to hope, untouched by desire, incapable of new delights, possessing only the sorry wisdom of a man disillusioned. Rather, I think, he would have continued to live by admiration, hope, and love; and as these were directed to worthier objects and yet more worthy, he would have ascended in dignity of being.

In life and in literature there are three kinds of men to whom we give peculiar honour. The first are the craftsmen, who put true and exact work into all they offer to the world, and find their happiness in such faithful service. Such a craftsman has been described with affectionate reverence by George Eliot in her poem "Stradivarius":—

> "That plain, white-aproned man who stood at work,
> Patient and accurate, full fourscore years,
> Cherished his sight and touch by temperance;
> And since keen sense is love of perfectness
> Made perfect violins, the needed paths
> For inspiration and high mastery."

We do not reckon Shelley among the craftsmen. The second class is small in numbers; we call these men conquerors, of whom, as seen in literature, the most eminent representatives in modern times have been Shakspere and Goethe. These are the masters of life; and having known joy and anguish, and labour and pleasure, and the mysteries of love and death, of

evil and of good, they attain at last a lofty serenity upon heights from which they gaze down, with an interest that has in it something of exalted pity, on the turmoil and strife below. It is their part to bring into actual union, as far as our mortal life permits, what is real and what is ideal. They are at home in both worlds. Shakspere retires to Stratford, and enjoys the dignity and ease and happy activity of the life of an English country gentleman; yet it was he who had wandered with Lear in the tempest, and meditated with Hamlet on the question of self-slaughter. Goethe, councillor to his noble master, the Grand-Duke of Weimar, in that house adorned with treasures of art and science, presides as an acknowledged chief over the intellectual life of a whole generation; yet he had known the storm and stress, had interpreted the feverish heart of his age in "Werther," and all its spiritual doubts and desires and aspirations in his "Faust." Such men may well be named conquerors, and Shelley was not one of these. But how shall we name the third class of men, who live for the ideal alone, and yet are betrayed into weakness and error, and deeds which demand an atonement of remorse; men who can never quite reconcile the two worlds in which we have our being, the world of material fact and the spiritual world above and beyond it; who give themselves away for love or give themselves away for light, yet sometimes mistake bitter for sweet, and darkness for light; children who stumble on the sharp stones and bruise their hands and feet, yet who can wing their way with angelic ease through spaces of the upper air. These are they whom we say the gods

love, and who seldom reach the fourscore years of Goethe's majestic old age. They are dearer perhaps than any others to the heart of humanity, for they symbolise in a pathetic way, both its weakness and its strength. We cannot class them with the exact and patient craftsmen; they are ever half defeated and can have no claim to take their seats beside the conquerors. Let us name them lovers; and if at any time they have wandered far astray, let us remember their errors with gentleness, because they have loved much. It is in this third class of those who serve mankind that Shelley has found a place.

THE TEXT OF WORDSWORTH'S POEMS.*

THE text of Wordsworth becomes a subject of study for reasons precisely opposite to those which apply to the text of Shelley. Writing in a white heat of inspiration, Shelley corrected and re-corrected with impetuous speed; his critical instincts acted in and through his creative energy; his workmanship is therefore exquisite, and every word is vital. But it is true that Shelley, caught up in the wind of his own flight, was borne past obstacles or borne over chasms which one advancing deliberately must have avoided or removed; and it was not his custom to return again and again upon his own work, applying to the outcome of his mood of inspiration the criticism of a humbler mood of reflection. There

* It is right to mention that this study was published before the foundation of the Wordsworth Society, and before the appearance of the first volume of the edition of Wordsworth's Poems, in which Professor Knight has attempted to exhibit the variations of the text. The following editions have been used in preparing these notes:—Lyrical Ballads, 1 vol., 1798; ditto, 2 vols., 1800; ditto, 1802; ditto, 1805; Poems, 2 vols., 1807; Excursion, 4to, 1814; White Doe, 1815; Poems, 2 vols., 1815; Thanksgiving Ode, &c., 1816; Peter Bell (2nd ed.), 1819; Waggoner, 1819; Excursion, 1820; Poems, 4 vols., 1820; River Duddon, &c., 1820; Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1822; Ecclesiastical Sketches, 1822; Poems, 5 vols., 1827; ditto, 4 vols., 1832; Yarrow Revisited, 1835; Sonnets, 1838; Poems chiefly of Early and Late Years, 1842; Poems, 6 vols., 1843; ditto, 6 vols., 1849; ditto, 1858; Earlier Poems (ed. Johnston), 1857. This last volume exhibits in notes the text of 1815. It may be observed that an earlier text is in some instances likely to be familiar to readers who have made use of other recent editions than those published by Moxon.

was no Shelley of forty, fifty, eighty years of age to re-survey his youthful self, to inherit the remains of a buried life, and to cherish and care for these as things which have a history. We get from Shelley no evening voluntaries of calm acquiescent happiness. To us his songs must for ever be

> "as are the arrows
> Of that silver sphere,
> Whose intense lamp narrows
> In the white dawn clear."

And had Shelley lived, he would, in a large measure, have forgotten the past while reaching to things that are before. Already in early manhood he could speak scornfully of his boyish verse; "Queen Mab," as far as his conscious feeling went, was less to him after a decade than was "The Borderers" to Wordsworth after half a century.

Then again chance and the evil genius of printers played strange tricks with Shelley's text. Sometimes the printers were Italian, sometimes the poet in Italy despatched his manuscript to London, and saw no proofs. Hence an opening for critical conjecture and comment, by virtue of which Shelley, as has been said, is hardly less than "a classic new unearthed," while Wordsworth must remain deprived for ever of the distinction conferred by critical tournaments in which the champions of this or that restored reading do doughty deeds. In "Descriptive Sketches," as given in Wordsworth's Poems, 1815, we find the lines:—

> "Then the milk-thistle bade those herds demand
> Three mites a day the pail and welcome hand."

But criticism is spared its ingenuity of conjecture, for the poet had seen his proofs, and in the list of errata we are directed for "mites" to read "times.' In "The Brothers" (Lyrical Ballads, 1800), we read:—

> "A child is born or christen'd, a field plough'd,
> A daughter sent to service, a web spun,
> The old house-cloth is deck'd with a new face."

Conservative critics would doubtless have found an essential point in the contrast between the new-spun web and the old house-cloth, and it might even have been ascertained from some venerable but obscure authority, that the new-facing of old cloths was a well-known custom in Ennerdale. Nor is this reading deprived of Wordsworth's authority in any errata-list, for the misprint escaped his notice. The needful emendation—easy to anticipate—is, however, supplied in a subsequent edition, where the new face is seen to belong not to a "cloth," but to a "clock."

Such service—skilled and loving—as Mr W. M. Rossetti and Mr Buxton Forman have rendered to Shelley is, accordingly, uncalled for, and indeed impossible in the case of Wordsworth. The study of Wordsworth's text is of interest not through any lack of superintendence on the poet's part, but because it received from him the studious superintendence of a lifetime. In place of our own conjectures we have the history of his changes of mood and mind. Wordsworth's mode of poetical creation was one which favoured a return upon his own work, and tempted him to revive former impressions and rehandle former themes. For his creative mood was itself a return upon some moment

or season of involuntary rapture or vision. That moment or season had passed away—passed, it may have been, into the distance of years. But it had left in the soil of the poet's imagination a living germ. Then came a time of recollection, a time of quiet; and by degrees the quiet was elevated (as we may say, using the words of mystical devotion) into illumination, union, and ecstasy. "Poetry," Wordsworth has written, "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind." And as in the original act or process of creation the poet returned upon a past feeling, recollecting it in tranquillity, so after his imagination had shaped this into a poem, he would return upon it again and again, he would listen to the voice of his own song, coming to him now echo-wise, until it seemed to him that he could indeed

> "beget
> That golden time again."

And then would begin the work of refashioning what he had made. It was not always, however, that the revival of the departed mood was true and complete, and thus at times a lower, more critical, less creative temper would cloud the original inspiration. Useful employment there was for critical sagacity, for judgment, in the revision by Wordsworth of his own poems; but not seldom he applied with disastrous effect a logic of good sense to works which ought to submit themselves

only to a logic of the emotions. In some cases he subsequently perceived that in following his later thoughts he had yielded to unwise counsellors, and he returned to his first thought and his first phrase. In others, the wandering from the primary intention once begun, he would wander still farther and farther astray.

We must also, in noting rehandlings of his text, bear in mind the great transformation which his character underwent, that transformation of the youth moving in the glory and the freshness of a dream into the man advancing with firm foot under the light of common day. At first in Wordsworth's poetry there is on the one hand a matter-of-factness (as Coleridge called it), most definite, most literal; and over against this there is the vision, the glory, the divine illumination. These are not opposed one to the other, but they stand apart. Gradually they approach and blend; and each submits to the influence of the other. The skyey splendours take a sober colouring; the things of use and wont become more precious because more habitually informed with what is spiritual. It has been matter of reproach against Wordsworth that he did not always remain what he was in the period of early manhood. "Wide apart," one has said, "as lay their lines of work, it is true alike of Shelley and Keats, that for them it was not fated, nor could it ever have been possible, to outlive

> 'the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;'

nor could Byron, while retaining as did Wordsworth the freshness and the force of his genius, have outlived his more fiery delight in the triumphant life of sea and cloud and

storm." It may be so, for Keats as a poet fled from the dissonances of real life, and Byron, feeling their presence, declared with bitter laughter that they must remain, and that man is always glorious and contemptible, majestic and mean; and Shelley dreamed indeed of a divine new creation of the universe by love, when the Titan should be free; but for the present to his eyes all is a strife between evil and good, and the martyr's fortitude and faith reveal the only harbourage from despair possible to heroic souls. But Wordsworth made a real attempt, now and here, for his own needs and those of others to accept all the elementary facts of life, and to resolve into a spiritual harmony the dissonances of this our world. The harmony was not wholly joyous and triumphant; a still sad music made a portion of the strain: it certainly was not meant for any Mænad dance, nor for the horns and cymbals of any company of Corybantes; but perhaps it was a harmony on the whole as much in keeping with our condition as any that has since been offered to our hearing.

It will be well to begin these fragmentary notes with mention of a few poems which have wholly disappeared from the later editions. No wrong is done to Wordsworth by calling attention to them. Although these poems, for reasons which appeared sufficient to their writer, are refused a place among the remains handed down to posterity, there is no ground for supposing that he regretted their appearance, or that he would be ill pleased if any person who had a care for his work should find them where they stand.

The most trivial in substance is, with one exception,

the earliest in date.* In the second edition of "Lyrical Ballads" appeared a poem of seven stanzas, entitled "Andrew Jones." It reappears fifteen years later in the collected "Poems" of 1815, where it is placed with some appropriateness by the side of "Simon Lee." The pathetic outwelling of gratitude from the worn-out, little, old huntsman of Cardiganshire,—gratitude for a trivial service,—stands as a token or sign of the oppressive load borne everywhere by helpless age. "Andrew Jones" is a kind of companion picture, in which the misery is unrelieved by anything except by a frank escape of indignation in the first and last stanzas:—

> "I hate that Andrew Jones; he'll breed
> His children up to waste and pillage:
> I wish the press-gang or the drum
> Would, with its rattling music, come†
> And sweep him from the village."

The most ardent lover of Wordsworth cannot shed many tears for the departed Andrew Jones, a village scoundrel the dastardliness of whose crime alone gives him fame; yet we could have better spared some "Poems of the

* I pass over "The Convict," a poem of thirteen stanzas, printed only in Lyrical Ballads, 1798. Its early omission implies Wordsworth's consciousness that it was unworthy of him. The verses indeed are so little characteristic that they might have been written by Hayley. The poet descends from the "slope of a mountain" to peer through a glimmering grate at the convict; the concluding verse may satisfy the reader:—

> "At thy name though compassion her nature resign,
> Though in virtue's proud mouth thy report be a stain,
> My care, if the arm of the mighty were mine,
> Would plant thee where yet thou might'st blossom again."

If one cared to make a comment on a poem so insignificant, it might be contrasted with the "Sonnets on the Punishment of Death."

† "With its tantara sound would come." 1800.

Fancy" or some "Ecclesiastical Sonnets." Its dry pathos, its bald recognition of misery, and its welling of pity out of the hard rock of pain, are characteristic of a fragment of Wordsworth's genius. Some passing horseman has thrown a penny to a travelling cripple and has ridden on; the "poor crawling helpless wretch" cannot stoop to pick the halfpence up, and no aid is at hand :—

> "Inch-thick the dust lay on the ground,
> For it had long been drouthy weather:
> So with his staff the cripple wrought
> Among the dust, till he had brought
> The halfpennies together."

A more prosaically piteous figure than that of the leech-gatherer stirring with his staff the pond and gazing into the muddy water. At the moment Andrew, the village tippler, passes :—

> "He stooped and took the penny up:
> And when the cripple nearer drew,
> Quoth Andrew, '*Under half-a-Crown,*
> *What a man finds is all his own;*
> *And so, my friend, good-day to you.*'"

We hear no imprecations from the victim; we do not see him shaking his staff at the retreating Andrew; thanks and praises ran fast out of the heart of Simon Lee for one small act of service; we do not know that the cripple felt even surprise.

The two small volumes of "Poems" published in 1807 are somewhat more difficult to procure than the "Lyrical Ballads," and are known to comparatively few readers of Wordsworth. The first of these volumes contains a poem the disappearance of which is certainly

to be regretted; nor is it easy to divine the motive for its exclusion from the later editions. The verses are of peculiar interest as belonging to that little group of poems which record the dearness to one lover and the death of Lucy; they are one in spirit with others of the group; we remember the rider, the cottage, the orchard plot; we know the "fond and wayward thoughts" which slide into a lover's head.* The poet's gift to surprise his Lucy, and to delight her eyes, is not of diamond or gold; such would but trouble the rustic simplicity of her way of life; his gift is the beauty of a little living lamp amid the grass. "I have made a discovery," Landor wrote from Wales, "which is that there are both nightingales and glow-worms in my valley. I would give two or three thousand pounds less for a place that was without them." The little poem may be presented as a whole:—

"Among all lovely things my Love had been;
Had noted well the stars, all flowers that grew
About her home; but she had never seen
A Glow-worm, never one, and this I knew.

"While riding near her home one stormy night,
A single Glow-worm did I chance to espy;
I gave a fervent welcome to the sight,
And from my horse I leapt; great joy had I.

"Upon a leaf the Glow-worm did I lay,
To bear it with me through the stormy night:
And, as before, it shone without dismay;
Albeit putting forth a fainter light.

* But though thus transformed into a lover's poem, the verses record an incident of 1795, in which the poet's sister Dorothy, and not the imagined Lucy, had a part.

"When to the dwelling of my Love I came,
I went into the Orchard quietly;
And left the Glow-worm, blessing it by name,
Laid safely by itself beneath a Tree.

"The whole next day, I hoped, and hoped with fear;
At night the Glow-worm shone beneath the Tree:
I led my Lucy to the spot—'Look here!'
Oh! joy it was for her, and joy for me."

It will not be out of place to notice here an episode appearing in the first (1814) and second (1820) editions of "The Excursion," but which, as far as I am aware, has not appeared during half a century in any authorised text. The whole of that great poem underwent minute revision; lines were omitted, lines were inserted, lines were altered.* A notice of the more significant changes would not be without interest, but here it is forbidden by the limits of this article. In connection with the omitted episode, one alteration affecting the chief character must be mentioned. The Wanderer, that flower of pedlars, younger brother of Autolycus, "like, but oh how different!" had in 1814 (and such was still his fate in 1820) the misfortune to lose his father, and had again the compensating good fortune to gain, by his mother's second marriage, a stepfather, to whose care he owed his scholarship, and some of his moral and spiritual wisdom.

"Ere he had outgrown his infant days
His widowed Mother for a second Mate
Espoused the Teacher of the Village School,
Who on her offspring zealously bestowed
Needful instruction."

* One insertion is, I believe, generally known as such—that of certain lines towards the close of Book I., in which the Wanderer asserts the power not alone of meditative wisdom, but of Christian faith, to soothe and elevate suffering. This was one of the latest alterations of the text, appearing for the first time in 1845.

In 1827 there was no toleration for the race of stepfathers; the village schoolmaster is dismissed, disappearing to bestow needful instruction we know not where, and the Wanderer's deceased father is resuscitated. Now towards the close of the sixth book a blameless stepmother is in like manner utterly abolished and destroyed. She, indeed, is not guilty of living, but she *has* lived, and her more immediate crime is that of occupying a place by her husband's side under the sods of the churchyard among the mountains. The mountains reject from among them her little hillock of earth. The Pastor has told the story of Wilfred Armathwaite, the causes and incidents of whose faithlessness to his marriage-vow are recorded with a fulness of detail in the earlier editions which is needed to point the moral, and which, in its wise gravity of statement, could not offend any save a diseased sensibility. The story is told of the faithful widower remaining unwedded in the midst of his budding and blooming girls. And then the chronicler turns to three ridges in the churchyard which lie side by side:

> "One Hillock, ye may note, is small and low,
> Sunk almost to a level with the plain
> By weight of time; the others, undepressed,
> Are bold and swelling."

Midmost lies the husband, who in the noon of manhood had laid in this earth his wife. Left alone with his many little ones, he has had to encounter an added sorrow in poverty, and the threatened loss of his paternal fields.

> "The dews
> Of night and morn that wet the mountain sides,

> The bright stars twinkling on their dusky tops,
> Were conscious of the pain that drove him forth
> From his own door, he knew not when—to range
> He knew not where; distracted was his brain,
> His heart was cloven; and full oft he prayed,
> In blind despair, that God would take them all."

But relief from want and fear—a gleam of light from the bosom of the cloud—comes suddenly, and in that renewal of life and energy,

> "The desolate Father raised his head and looked
> On the wide world in hope."

Before very long, "a virtuous woman of grave years, and of prudential habits," undertakes "the sacred office of a wife" to him and of a mother to his children. To all she is kind and good, only failing in some partial fondness for the babe "whose heart had known no mother but herself." By industry, and with the aid of her "prudential habits," the land is at last redeemed, and passes to the eldest son of the lost young wife. Every trace of this story has disappeared from "The Excursion."

We pass now to a volume published in 1838 to satisfy the demand of some of Wordsworth's friends, who wished to see all the sonnets, hitherto scattered through the several divisions of his poems, brought under the eye at once. Two sonnets, one on the Ballot, and one on Copyright, written in the year of this volume's publication, have not been retained in the later editions of their author's Complete Poetical Works. The Copyright sonnet is the second of two treating of that theme. It takes the form of an address from a poet to his grandchild, and the thought expressed in its fourteen lines is

that, unless authorship receive its just rewards, not alone rewards of fame and usefulness but of current coin, the descendants of the poet, sunk perhaps in poverty, may be unable to obtain the culture needful to feel or understand his simplest lay. "This feeling," wrote Wordsworth in a note, "had been forced too often upon my own mind by remembering how few descendants of men eminent in literature are even known to exist." The "Protest against the Ballot" is of finer quality. Wordsworth's alarm upon the eve of the Reform of 1832 is known to all readers of his verse or of the letters in his "Memoirs." To Crabb Robinson he talked of leaving the country on account of the imminent ruin. The ten-pound householder, as we know, won his right to vote, and somehow England still survived. But a further horror lay ahead—the Radical Reformers clamoured for secret voting. What monster might not slyly lurk within the ballot-box?

> "Forth rushed, from Envy sprung and Self-conceit,
> A Power misnamed the SPIRIT OF REFORM,
> And through the astonished Island swept in storm,
> Threatening to lay all Orders at her feet
> That crossed her way. Now stoops she to entreat
> Licence to hide at intervals her head,
> Where she may work safe, undisquieted,
> In a close Box, covert for Justice meet.
> St George of England! keep a watchful eye
> Fixed on the Suitor; frustrate her request;
> Stifle her hope; for, if the State comply,
> From such Pandorian gift may come a Pest
> Worse than the Dragon that bowed low his crest,
> Pierced by thy spear in glorious victory."

The second sonnet on the Ballot, that ending with the line

> "Hurrah for ——, hugging his Ballot-box,"

was originally relegated to a place among the notes. The reason for its exclusion from the general collection, assigned in a note which has since disappeared, is not without interest. "In no part of my writings have I mentioned the name of any cotemporary, that of Buonaparte only excepted, but for the purpose of eulogy; and therefore, as in the concluding verse of what follows there is a deviation from this rule (for the blank will be easily filled up), I have excluded the sonnet from the body of the collection, and placed it here as a public record of my detestation, both as a man and a citizen, of the proposed contrivance." The blank was probably meant to be filled with the name of Grote.*

Wordsworth's habit of rehandling his poems was of early origin. Already in 1800 some changes are introduced into the "Lyrical Ballads" of 1798. They are, however, neither numerous nor important.† The alterations effected in 1802 in the poems which had appeared two years previously are considerable, and from that date until shortly before his death Wordsworth never ceased to touch and retouch his writings. Probably

* It is perhaps worth mentioning in a note, that among the "Evening Voluntaries" of the volume "Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems" (1835) is included a cento made up of a stanza of Akenside, connected with a stanza from Beattie by a couplet of Thomson. "This practice," Wordsworth writes, "in which the author sometimes indulges, of linking together, in his own mind, favourite passages from different authors, seems in itself unobjectionable;" and he hopes that this specimen may "open to others a harmless source of private gratification."

† The only poem much affected by these alterations is "Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree;" but touches will be found in "Animal Tranquillity and Decay," "The Thorn," "The Female Vagrant," "Simon Lee," and "The Idiot Boy." The "Lines written in a Boat," and "Lines written near Richmond," formed one piece in 1798. On the suggestion of Coleridge the poem was divided into two.

some of the newer readings never had the entire approval of the poet, but were concessions to the scruples of a weak-minded public. "In policy," he said, when dictating his notes to Miss Fenwick, "I excluded 'Alice Fell' from many editions of my Poems." And it is confessed in a note to "The Waggoner" that, from unwillingness to startle the reader at the outset by so bold a mode of expression, the lines descriptive of the night-hawk's note,

> "The Night-hawk is singing his frog-like tune,
> Twirling his watchman's rattle about,"

were altered before publication. But for the most part the changes of text serve as materials for a true history of Wordsworth's feelings and opinions with reference to his art. In the critical manifestoes prefixed to the first and second editions of "Lyrical Ballads," two motives for those poems—spoken of in the preface as "experiments"—are insisted on: first, to ascertain how far "the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society" (Preface, 1798), or, as he puts it differently two years later, how far "a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation" (Preface, 1800), is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure; secondly (a motive first indicated in 1800), "to make the incidents of common life interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature."* Each poem, we are

* It may here be noted that the celebrated "Preface of 1800," as it appears in later editions, differs in many and important particulars from the Preface as actually printed in that year. The changes are effected in all ways, by omission, addition, and substitutions.

told, has a purpose, and in his Preface, in a passage since omitted, Wordsworth goes from piece to piece through a series of poems, stating in brief the psychological significance of each. Now these two motives carried with them two temptations: one was the temptation to literality, matter-of-factness, trivial or accidental detail, and over-familiar phraseology; the other was the temptation to excessive self-consciousness, to a fatuous caressing of the moral or psychological motive of the poem, or to a kind of turning inside-out of the poem's inward parts. "Here," we can sometimes imagine the writer saying to us through his verses, "I am illustrating the laws of association of ideas; here I am subtly treating of the maternal passion." And thus in a second way arose a tendency to attach importance, sometimes undue importance, to the trivial, its connection with some one of "the primary laws of our nature" conferring dignity on what would otherwise be mean or merely accidental.

Wordsworth never receded from his principles, but he perceived that they had occasionally been abused by himself, and he was not unwilling to make reparation for his misdeeds. In the second volume of 1807 some short pieces are placed under the heading "Moods of my own Mind;" these pieces were at a later time distributed under the classes, founded on the psychological division adopted in 1815, and retained to the last. The little poem which describes a whirling and dancing of withered leaves under a hail shower, as though some Robin Goodfellow were piping to them, closed originally 1802) with the petition:—

"Oh! grant me, Heaven, a heart at ease,
That I may never cease to find,
Even in appearances like these,
Enough to nourish and to stir my mind."

Wordsworth's egoism is, so to speak, of an abstract kind: through the operation of his own mind he contemplates the universal laws. Still this egoism was inartistic, a Wordsworthian form of effusiveness; and his severer instinct as a poet rightly banished such lines as the above.* The marvellous passage which closes the second book of "The Excursion," a bodying forth in words of the mystic pageantry of storm-clouds transmuted by the sun, is introduced as originally written, with an apology. Speech cannot express such glories, too bright and fair even for remembrance,

"Yet the attempt may give
Collateral interest to this homely Tale."

We are now happily spared this apology. Unhappily other sins of Wordsworth knew no repentance. In the same spirit by which the poem of the Leech-gatherer was named "Resolution and Independence," Derwent Coleridge remarked, the "Old Cumberland Beggar" might have been changed into "Advantages of Mendicancy." We have still to suffer a twinge at sight of the turning inside-out of the poem originally named "Old Man Travelling," by its later title, "Animal Tranquillity and Decay." †

* Compare the verse omitted from the poem beginning, "Let other bards of angels sing."

† In Lyrical Bards, 1798, this formed a second and subordinate title. This poem originally ended with the old man's answer to an inquiry as to the object of his journey. He travels to see his son who is dying (lying, 1800) in an hospital at Falmouth, whither he has been brought after a sea-fight.

Wordsworth's omissions made for sake of avoiding the merely trivial, literal, matter-of-fact, accidental, or grotesque, are numerous, and some of these are sufficiently well known. Simon Lee during two-and-twenty years stood before the reader in that "long blue livery coat"

"That's fair behind, and fair before,"

and which is only faintly referred to after 1815; during several years more he remained bereft of his right eye; finally the eye was restored to him, but the lustre of his livery was dimmed. If Wordsworth had a tender consideration for weaker brethren who might read "The Waggoner," it can hardly be said that he was as considerate towards the readers of "Peter Bell." That characteristic and highly interesting piece belongs essentially to the period of the first "Lyrical Ballads," but its author, as Cottle tells us, objected to publishing it in any other form than as a separate poem, and hence it was held over. After having in manuscript almost "survived its majority," as a separate poem it appeared. During the long interval pains were taken "at different times to make the production less unworthy of a favourable reception." We know of what nature that reception was. Wordsworth again set to work and revised the poem throughout. In 1819 the opening stanza of Part the First runs as follows:—

"All by the moonlight river-side
It gave three miserable groans;
'Tis come then to a pretty pass,'
Said Peter to the groaning Ass,
'But I will *bang* your bones.'"

And again, in a later stanza, there is a second bone-

banging. Already in the following year this had been erased. And that verse prefixed as a motto to his "Peter Bell the Third" by Shelley,—that verse descriptive of a possible vision of prosaic horror below the water into which the Potter is staring,—

> "Is it a party in a parlour,
> Crammed just as they on earth were crammed,
> Some sipping punch—some sipping tea,
> But as you by their faces see,
> All silent and all—damned?"—

that verse, which is no invention of "Miching Mallecho, Esq.," disappeared hastily, and disappeared so effectually that its existence at any time in Wordsworth's poem has been denied. "The Idiot Boy," written with speed and in a most gleeful mood, was always a favourite with its author. Yet,—perhaps for the hardness of our hearts,—he made a sacrifice of some passages not out of keeping with the rest:—

> "Beneath the moon that shines so bright,
> Till she is tired, let Betty Foy
> With girt and stirrup *fiddle-faddle*,
> But wherefore set upon a saddle,
> Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy?"

This verse held its ground until 1827. Any reader who can love Betty Foy, and Susan Gale, and Johnny, and the wise Pony, will find no difficulty in receiving the verse. The anxious mother's *fiddle-faddling* is a gnat at which no person of a pharynx capacious enough for Johnny and the Pony need strain. Let Betty fiddle-faddle till she is tired; let Susan or the Pony wince, our withers are unwrung.

Some of the dropped lines and stanzas of Words-

worth's earlier poems are worth recalling to mind; the loss of some is to be seriously regretted. It is not without interest, in connection with the history of the poet's opinions, to note that passage in the earliest-published fragment of "Guilt and Sorrow" which tells of the ruin of the old honest father dispossessed of his little patrimony by a covetous lord of land; nor that passage which paints in words so vivid the horrors of strife and carnage; nor, again, that passage in which Wordsworth, who has been charged with the guilt of ingrained respectability, turns with a natural sympathy to the knavish wanderers who gave themselves, with too small warrant, the honourable name and style of potters:—

"My heart is touched to think that men like these,
The earth's rude tenants, were my first relief;
How kindly did they paint their vagrant ease!
And their long holiday that feared not grief,
For all belonged to all, and each was chief.
No plough their sinews strained; on grating road
No wain they drove, and yet, the yellow sheaf
In every vale for their delight was stowed;
For them in nature's meads the milky udder flowed."*

A poet of our own day has put into the mouth of one of his imaginary characters, who is a slave to society, his confession of a yearning for vagabondage; the heart of Elvire's husband "fires up for lawlessness;" he yields for an hour to the charm of the truant life. The youthful Wordsworth felt a proneness of affection towards any-

* Lyrical Ballads, 1798: "The Female Vagrant." This poem of Salisbury Plain, and the various fragments of it, published at various times, gave Wordsworth an infinity of "poetic pains." The version of 1802 differs considerably from that of 1798, and again from that of 1800.

thing which symbolized the life of unchartered freedom, even while his feet were advancing along paths which led him to the bondage and the liberty of duty.

And here may be noticed a remarkable stanza which occurs in the noble "Ode to Duty" as first printed in the "Poems" of the year 1807. The poet has owned his weariness and his weakness; he has lived as if life's business were a summer mood; he has "shoved unwelcome tasks away;"* but now he would serve Duty more strictly; he longs for steadfast hopes, and for an enduring repose. And, as we now read the poem, he passes on directly to that sublime address to the "Stern Lawgiver" before whom flowers laugh, and through whom the most ancient heavens are fresh and strong. But who is this Duty, and how shall she be known? This Duty is not law merely imposed from without; it is law approved from within; it is a free Will made wise. The omitted stanza—which precedes the address to the "Stern Lawgiver"—a stanza never reprinted since 1807, runs thus:—

> "Yet not the less would I throughout
> Still act according to the voice
> Of my own wish; and feel past doubt
> That my submissiveness was choice:
> Not seeking in the school of pride
> For 'precepts over-dignified,'
> Denial and restraint I prize
> No farther than they breed a second Will more wise."

I cannot but regret that Wordsworth, instead of removing these lines, did not rather confer on them, as he well

* The stanza containing these words has been altered, and much improved.

knew how, that full and heightened style which would have made them worthy to retain their place in the great poem of which they were once a part.

The swan on Locarno's lake is known to all students of Wordsworth's poetry, but he does not now sail before the swan-like Dion. The reader must seek the beautiful creature in a jungle of notes. The removal of this opening stanza of Dion, after it had held its ground for twenty years, was not without warrant. Beautiful in itself, the passage lent no aid to the poem as a whole. But the majestic bird must not be permitted to hide himself from sight. He is an Italian cousin of that sole voyager on still Saint Mary's lake, sole save for his companioning shadow. There the green hills are mirrored in the unruffled water; through her depths Saint Mary's Lake is visibly delighted. The swan of Locarno sails at night, and leaves behind him an illumined wake; oaring along with a gushing impulse, he scatters the reflection of rock and wood, and has for his companion—companion shall we say or rival?—not his own shadow, but the queenly moon. There is another poem from which an exquisite stanza has been robbed; this was one of Wordsworth's latest crimes, and one of his worst. From 1807, when the poem "Louisa" first appeared, until at least 1832, the lovely maid needed not to be apologised for, and with her quickened blood and breath she stood before us an English girl more lovely than Grecian nymph or ~~naiad~~; she is "ruddy, fleet, and strong."

> "And down the rocks can leap along
> Like rivulets in May."

Inspired by the Author of Evil, Wordsworth began to suspect that a young woman who could leap about the rocks in this fashion was hardly a person to be accepted in high society; at all events why need she be blowsy? "I confess," exclaimed Mrs Primrose, "I don't like to see my daughters trudging up to their pew all blowsed and red with walking, and looking for all the world as if they had been winners at a smock race." The poem opens in 1843 with the following nauseous words:—

> "Though by a sickly taste betrayed,
> Some will dispraise the lovely maid,
> With fearless pride I say
> That she is healthful, fleet, and strong."

Wordsworth was saved from entire dishonour. By 1849 the original text had resumed its place, with the exception of the offensive epithet "ruddy." Louisa is now "nymph-like." We grow elated to be spared the reference to "sickly taste" and the dispraise of Louisa by genteel persons. But suddenly a shock comes; we stand in presence of irreparable wrong. A stanza, which had lived in the poem and illuminated it with fresh loveliness since 1807, is gone. Where are the spiritual smiles that rose and brightened and sank on Louisa's face?

> "And she has smiles to earth unknown,
> Smiles, that with motion of their own
> Do spread and sink and rise;
> That come and go with endless play,
> And ever as they pass away
> Are hidden in her eyes." *

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* Compare Shelley's "Smiles," which

> "Make the cold air fire—then *screen them*
> *In those looks* where whose gazes,
> Faints entangled in their mazes."

They are gone. Was this ravage wrought in the same spirit in which Wordsworth, on his nutting expedition, rose and mutilated the nook of hazels? *

How and where to end a poem are questions which puzzle at times the poet's will. If, indeed, the poet desires to lead you up to a point at which he will suddenly spring a mine upon you, or discharge a rocket, or perform a sudden pirouette and so disappear in the glory of high art, the ending is of course prepared beforehand and written first. But Wordsworth did not work in this manner, and he had many searchings of heart as to whether the final impression left by his lines was precisely what he intended that it should be. The last stanza of "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman" (1798) disappeared in 1815 to be replaced long after. To "Foresight" a final stanza was added. The ending of "The Skylark," the poem beginning "Up with me! up with me into the clouds!" was altered and re-altered. The last stanza of the good-humoured trifle entitled "Rural Architecture" disappeared (1805) and again resumed its place (1820). †

* Compare with the changes wrought in "Louisa" the lines which describe Lucy at that time when suddenly a fear of her death came with a pang into her lover's heart:

"When she I loved was strong and gay,
And like a rose in June,"

changed (by 1843) to—

"When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June."

† "Some little I've seen of blind boisterous works
By Christian disturbers more savage than Turks."

The second line ran in 1800—

"In Paris and London, 'mong Christians or Turks."

In 1827 the three rosy-cheeked schoolboys were not named, and the poem opened—

"From the meadow of Armthwait on Thirlmere's wild shore."

In 1800 "Poor Susan" closed thus :—

> "Poor Outcast ! return—to receive thee once more
> The house of thy Father will open its door,
> And thou, once again in thy plain russet gown,
> May'st hear the thrush sing from a tree of its own."

It was surely right to strike away this stanza (omitted, 1802) from the little poem whose unity of impression it only marred. Cheapside, the silent morning, the song of the caged bird, and the vision of a lost home, these are all that make up the present moment for poor Susan ; and in that moment the dream is already passing away ; her return is not to a cottage in the dale, but to the London street :—

> "The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
> And the colours have all passed away from her eyes." *

Little need be said of additions made by Wordsworth to the original text of his poems, for these, speaking generally, remain, and are known to all his readers of the present day. It was seldom that Wordsworth, while holding to his original feeling or idea, added baser matter ; the added lines nearly always heighten and enrich the piece. When his vision grew troubled, when his hand slackened its grasp, when he lost faith in his

* Before leaving the subject of dropped stanzas room may be found for a note on "The Danish Boy." That mysterious fragment originally (1800) possessed a stanza, which would probably have been retained had the poem been completed. It describes in the manner of "The Thorn," two green sods hard by a blasted tree, which neither sun, nor wind, nor rain, can bind together, but which lie as if just severed by the spade. In the editions of 1827 and 1832 a note informs the reader that a ballad was to have been written on the story of a Danish prince, who, flying from battle, was murdered by a cottager for sake of his valuables ; the house fell under a curse, and the valley ever after was haunted by the spirit of the youth.

former self, then he would begin to patch and piece incongruous things together; while working upon his original lines he was safe. A poem of small worth, "The Song of the Wandering Jew," is indeed lowered in value by the alloy of added verses; but such a case is exceptional. There are lines in "Michael" which we could ill lose, telling how Luke, a ten-years boy, went with his father to the heights—

> "Why should I relate
> That objects which the shepherd loved before
> Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came
> Feelings and emanations, things which were
> Light to the sun and music to the wind;
> And that the Old Man's heart seemed born again?"

These lines were first inserted in the text of 1802. More questionable is the matter of gain or loss in the "Daffodils." When the flowers flash upon the inward eye, the poet's heart *dances* with the daffodils. In the poem as printed in 1807, at the first moment of beholding them, he sees them not as "golden," but as "dancing"—

> "A host of dancing daffodils
> Along the lake, beneath the trees,
> Ten thousand dancing in the breeze."

The stanza beginning,

> "Continuous as the stars that shine
> And twinkle in the milky-way,"

an insertion of 1815, is not found in the original version, and for "jocund company" we there read "laughing company." The whole poem is filled with the laughter and the dance of flowers and waves, and the

contrast between the quiet couch, with its pensive mood, and that involuntary *αἰσθητικὴ φαντασία* of dancing blossoms, becomes the more impressive. Perhaps the stars in the milky-way twinkle, but assuredly they do not dance; and yet for sake of the "tossing their heads" —ten thousand tossing their heads at once—we must accept the new stanza of 1815, and make no ungrateful comment.*

In the case of "Daffodils," new lines have been introduced, and old lines have been altered. The same is true to a far greater extent of "Ruth." Indeed so perplexingly have stanzas come in, and gone out, and changed places in the several versions of that poem, that it is impossible here to present the facts in detail. It may be said in general terms that "Ruth" is found in four states—that of 1800, which is the least elaborated; secondly, that of 1802, in which many alterations, which might be to the advantage of the poem if skilfully executed, are made in a bungling manner; thirdly, that of 1815, which nearly reverts to the original form; and last, that of 1820, which resulted from all the suggestions of 1802 and 1805 having been again taken up,

* In the edition of 1815, a note, worth quoting here, is appended to "Daffodils." "The subject of these stanzas is rather an elementary feeling and simple impression (approaching to the nature of an ocular spectrum) upon the imaginative faculty, than an *exertion* of it. The one which follows ['Poor Susan'] is strictly a Reverie, and neither that nor the next after it in succession, 'The Power of Music,' would have been placed here except [to avoid a needless multiplication of the classes.]" May I offer in this modest corner a thought or a fancy which pleases me—that Wordsworth in placing side by side his "Power of Music," and his "Star-Gazers," looked on the poems as companions—the one illustrating the gains of emotional excitation, when natural and pure; the other, the barrenness of knowledge unvitalised by the emotions?

and carried out by a thoroughly trained craftsman.* Nothing remained to be done except to add the last touch of perfection to a word or a line.

The reasons which induced Wordsworth to displace an original reading and substitute a different one were of various kinds. Sometimes a line was metrically defective; it limped or floundered. If our eyes may be trusted, against the incredulous protest of our ears, the opening lines of "Personal Talk" were in 1807—

> "I am not one who much or oft delight
> To season my fireside with personal talk
> *About* friends, who live within an easy walk."

Of course a touch set the line right. Similarly the piece beginning with the words of Sydney, "With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the sky," was by a little manipulation transformed from a poem of fifteen lines to a sonnet.† Sometimes, again, it is an error as to some point of fact which Wordsworth desires to correct. The "broad *green* wave" that flashed images round Leonard as he sailed under a cloudless sky becomes a "broad blue wave;" the "cowslip-gathering in May's dewy prime" of the wanderer on Salisbury Plain in her girlhood is transferred from May to June. The Broom boasting her good fortune, exclaims:

> "The Spring for me a garland weaves
> Of yellow flowers and verdant leaves."

* In the Lyrical Ballads (1805) a fine addition was made, "It was a fresh and glorious world," &c., and an important improvement effected by transposing stanzas.

† On the other hand a stanza opens with an imperfect line through the rejection of Coleridge's "A simple child, dear brother Jim," which had served to introduce the poem "We are Seven" in "Lyrical Ballads."

On reconsideration she finds her benefactor to be Summer—

> "On me such bounty Summer pours
> That I am covered o'er with flowers."

Or again a word is found unsuitable, or has been improperly used—

> "Forth he teems
> His little song in gushes."

So Wordsworth wrote in "The Green Linnet," 1807. The Edinburgh Reviewer italicized the word *teems*, and it disappeared from the poem. In the "Boy of Winandermere" the word *scene* occurred twice—once in the vague popular sense, which carries with it no reference to anything visual—

> "A wild scene
> Of mirth and jocund din."

The passage is altered (1805) to "Concourse wild of jocund din." * One adjective Wordsworth had loved and used for its own sake with a peculiar fondness in his earlier poems, the adjective *sweet*. A hard time of it this innocent adjective had in after-years; it was hunted as a criminal, discovered in its nestling-places, dragged to the critical judgment-seat, and sentenced, in numerous instances, to perpetual banishment. Sweet smiles, sweet looks, sweet flowers, sweet bowers, sweet flocks, sweet mornings greet us no more where they once did, and bright looks, soft bowers, fine flocks take their place.

> "No Nightingale did ever chaunt
> So sweetly to reposing bands"

* See Sara Coleridge's note on this passage: "Biographia Literaria," vol. ii. pp. 111-113 (ed. 1847).

as the Solitary Reaper sang in Wordsworth's hearing—

> "No sweeter voice was ever heard
> In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird"

than that voice of hers. In later editions the lines become,

> "No Nightingale did ever chaunt
> More welcome notes to weary bands.
> . . . . . .
> A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
> In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird."

A special power of the verb *to be*, by which the predication of bare existence, apart from qualities and operations, produces a certain spiritualising effect, had at one time an attraction for Wordsworth's mind, which it afterwards appears to have lost. He notices this power of the verb in a letter which explains his feelings in writing "The Leech-gatherer." "What," he asks, "is brought forward? A lonely place, 'a pond by which an old man *was*, far from all house and home;' not *stood*, nor *sat*, but *was*—the figure presented in the most naked simplicity possible." But this letter was written while "The Leech-gatherer" was still in manuscript, and when the poem appeared in print the *was* had been replaced by *stood*. "The stars they *were* among my dreams," Wordsworth wrote in 1798, and it is matter of rejoicing that this beautiful line again took its place in "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman," after it had for a time been dispossessed by the unimaginative words: "The stars *were mingled* with my dreams." Not so fortunate was the first poem, "On the Naming of Places:"

"Yet meanwhile
There was such deep contentment in the air."

has been abandoned for

"But meanwhile prevailed
Such an entire contentment in the air."

Still greater is the loss in the sonnet beginning "It is a beauteous evening calm and free," where the dwelling effect of the word *broods* in the line—

"The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea,"

is a poor gain to set over against the loss of that line of 1807, which rendered so purely that living union of the abysses of the waters and the sky—

"The gentleness of heaven is on the sea."

Before leaving this sonnet we may note the happy reversion of Wordsworth to the original reading of the first line. In the complete collection of Sonnets, 1838, we find—

"Air sleeps,—from strife or stir the clouds are free;"

and again, a few years later, a second attempt was made at improving what was perfect—

"A fairer face of evening cannot be"

But the simple positive statement that the time was perfect sufficed, and it resumed its place at last.

Another group of minute verbal changes is worthy of attention, because it shows some alteration of feeling on Wordsworth's part with reference to poetical personification. His recoil from the unreality and vapidity of eighteenth-century work pretending to be imaginative had gone too far.

"There! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, that is England, there *she* lies,"

is truer to the aroused loyalty and love of our mother-country than the original "there *it* lies." So, too—

> "Ye children of a soil that doth advance
> *Her* haughty brow against the coast of France,"

is right, and the earlier "*its* haughty brow" was justly condemned.*

Not a few of the later readings in Wordsworth's text had their origin in the writer's wish to temper some expression which seemed too harsh or violent, to bring within bounds some extravagance, or to tone down into harmony with its surrounding some line of crude vividness. Thus the service of attendants in a public hospital ("Guilt and Sorrow") is spoken of at first as being rendered with "careless cruelty;" afterwards with "cold formality;" the lawyer in "A Poet's Epitaph" is at first bid to carry elsewhere

> "The hardness of thy coward eye,
> The falsehood of thy sallow face;"

in later editions

> "The keenness of that practised eye,
> The hardness of that sallow face;"

and the philosopher who would peep and botanise upon his mother's grave has in the earliest text a "pin-point of a soul," altered in 1815 to "that abject thing, thy soul," and finally settling down into "thy ever-dwindling soul." So again in "Hart-leap Well," the three bounds of the hunted animal, in the first form of the tale, cover

* It is more questionable whether

> "And yet thy heart
> The lowliest duties on *herself* did lay,"

gains upon the original *itself*. Duties, Wordsworth no doubt argued, belong to a person—not to a thing.

no less than "nine roods" of ground, reduced at a later time to "three roods;" * in the same poem Sir Walter's horse, after his eager up-hill race, stands "foaming like a mountain cataract;" the words appeared extravagant, and the poet, at the cost of finding a new rhyme, altered them, in a not unfortunate moment, to "white with foam as if with cleaving sleet." A favourite dog—little Music—had lived to extreme old age, when a gentle death might seem a thing to be desired. In the "Tribute to the Memory" of this dog, we read, in 1807—

> "I prayed for thee, and that thy end were past."

And why not? Had not Coleridge taught that

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small?"

Was not Music worth many sparrows? In 1820, Wordsworth, if he prayed, prayed in secret, and the line is altered to "I grieved for thee and wished thy end was past."

Perhaps no alteration falling under this head is more remarkable than the omission from the Thanksgiving Ode, 1816, of the awful words addressed to the Lord of Hosts—

> "But Thy most dreaded instrument,
> In working out a pure intent,
> Is Man—arrayed for mutual slaughter—
> Yea, Carnage is thy daughter!"

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* So also in "Anecdote for Fathers" (1798)—

> "And *five* times to the child I said,
> 'Why, Edward, tell me why?'"

changed to "*three* times" (after 1843). And so, again, Leonard's age in "The Brothers," at the date when he parts from James, is altered from thirteen to sixteen, to allow time for the growth of so deep a fraternal love.

These lines (the word "dreaded" having been changed to "awful") were retained as late as 1843. The hour of stern enthusiasm, inspired by a prophetic vision, needs not to be revised and corrected by the hour of meditative calm. At the same time a more important change was effected. The Ode was sliced into a number of pieces; some of these remained to represent the Ode of 1816 as originally published; the others were pieced together to form the companion Ode now dated 1815. It is painful to think that the poem possessed so little unity of inward life as to allow of this slicing process. Can it have been that the portion now dated 1815 was indeed written in that year, was worked into the ode, kindred in subject, of the following year, and that in dividing the poem as Wordsworth did at the last, he was but recurring to the original and natural arrangement of his first manuscript?

Such changes were not always judicious. Some of them, as has been said, may have been concessions to Wordsworth's readers. "On my alluding," Crabb Robinson recorded in 1815, "to the lines—

> 'I've measured it from side to side,
> 'Tis three feet long and two feet wide,'

and confessing that I dared not read them aloud in company, he said, 'They ought to be liked.'" The poet, however, at length capitulated to his critics. I must confess to some regret for the loss of the precise statistics in this poem; I really wish to know whether Martha Ray drowned her baby in the little pond, or not; perhaps from a lack of humour on my part the words

have never made me smile, and the strangeness and mystery of the poem seemed to me the more affecting because they lived and moved amid details so prosaic and precise.* One change in "The Thorn" assuredly no true lover of the "Lyrical Ballads" can accept, that which transforms plain old Farmer Simpson into "grey-haired Wilfred of the glen;" if this is to be received, then let Martha Ray obtain leave to be known henceforth as Anna Matilda or Laura Maria, and Stephen Hill in future be named Lothario.

Nor can a true lover of Wordsworth feel anything but blushing shame at the spurious dignity lent to the voyage of the Blind Highland Boy by the poetical craft in which he drifts away (1815), Wordsworth having consigned to obscurity that humbler vessel,

> "A household tub, like one of those
> Which women use to wash their clothes." (1807.)

The turtle-shell was, however, in 1815, a turtle-shell and nothing more. Again yielding to external pressure the lines which compare it to the pearly car of Amphitrite, and the coracle on Vaga's breast, were added (1820); we have indeed travelled far from the Scottish salt-sea loch and the little Highland cottage. Now and

* Wordsworth probably would have defended the lines on dramatic grounds, the supposed narrator being some such man as "a captain of a small trading vessel . . . who, being past the middle age of life, had retired upon an annuity, or small independent income, to some village or country town of which he was not a native." The *Edinburgh Reviewer* parodies the *annonce:* "Of this piece the reader will necessarily form a very erroneous judgment, unless he is apprised that it was written by a pale man in a green coat, sitting cross-legged on an oaken stool, with a scratch on his nose, and a spelling dictionary on a table."

again a touch of homely reality disappears in the later versions, as in "Personal Talk"; that reference to the little room at Town-End, Grasmere, in which Wordsworth and his sister ate and wrote. "The last line but two stood at first," Wordsworth himself said, "better and more characteristically, thus:

> 'By my half-kitchen, my half-parlour fire.'"

Sometimes a phrase, ennobled by its power of spiritual interpretation, is condemned on the ground that it is over-familiar; Wordsworth listened and listened to the voice of the Solitary Reaper, and did not move away until his soul was satisfied:

> "I listen'd till I had my fill,"

a perfect line, which gives way in later editions to the very commonplace one—

> "I listened, motionless and still."

Sometimes a lively metaphorical expression is replaced by one less vivid:

> "The torrent down the rocky dell
> Came thundering loud and fast,"

and the Eglantine trembled; in a "Poem of the Fancy," the earlier reading might have been permitted to stand,—

> "The stream came thundering down the dell,
> And gallop'd loud and fast."

The apostrophe to the Daisy as "bold lover of the sun" is an audacity which surely justifies itself, yet it could not keep its place. Crabb Robinson notes in his diary,

1815, "Wordsworth has substituted *ebullient* for *fiery*, speaking of the nightingale.

> 'O Nightingale, thou surely art
> A creature of a fiery heart,'

and *jocund* for *laughing*, applied to the daffodils; but he will probably restore the original epithets." Half of the prophecy was fortunately fulfilled, and we can read "The Nightingale" without feeling that, like Macbeth's *Amen*, the *ebullient* sticks in our throats. Would that Wordsworth, in the happy hour which restored the "fiery heart" to the Nightingale, had given us back the fire in the old man's eyes who stood upon the margin of the moorish flood:

> "Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise
> Broke from the sable orbs of his yet vivid eyes."

These are fine lines, but we rather hold by the original,

> "He answered me with pleasure and surprise,
> And there was while he spake a fire about his eyes." *

But I have played the part of the critical Polonius long enough. "*Mobled queen is good*," or rather, indeed, "*this is too long*," as was the chamberlain's beard. The reader, however, who has followed me so far, will permit a brief notice of four poems which have undergone particularly interesting alterations. The second verse of the "Cuckoo" is an example of the attainment of perfect words, which look most simple, natural, and

* Some readers will, perhaps, be glad to restore in their private thoughts the original text of a touching verse in "The Fountain:"—

> "'And, Matthew, for thy children dead,
> I'll be a son to thee,'
> At this he *grasp'd his hands* and said,
> 'Alas! that cannot be.'"

direct, through a series of fortunate experiments. The various attempts may be presented without comment:—

"While I am lying on the grass,
I hear thy restless shout:
From hill to hill it seems to pass
About, and all about!" (1807.)

While I am lying on the grass,
Thy loud note smites my ear!—
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off and near!" (1815.)

"While I am lying on the grass,
Thy loud note smites my ear;
It seems to fill the whole air's space,
At once far off and near." (1820.)

"While I am lying on the grass,
Thy two-fold shout I hear,
That seems to fill the whole air's space,
As loud far off as near." (1827.)

"While I am lying on the grass,
Thy two-fold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off and near. (1849; certainly after 1843.)

Nearly half a century was needed for the creation of this dewdrop of poetry.*

Among the characteristic defects of Wordsworth's poetry commented on by Coleridge, he notices "thoughts and images too great for the subject," and as an example he cites the poem on the "Gipsies." The speaker in that poem expresses his indignation at the listless inactivity of the poor tawny wanderers, during one day, "in a series of lines, the diction and imagery of which

* This example of Wordsworth's alterations of the text seems also to have struck Professor Knight, who presents the various readings in the Preface to his edition of Wordsworth's Poetical Works, as I had done in this article.

would have been rather above than below the mark, had they been applied to the immense empire of China, unprogressive for thirty centuries." I am not about to consider the justice of this criticism, but to call attention to the closing lines of the poem as it originally stood. The sun has gone to rest after his labour, the evening star has come forth, the mighty moon looks this way :—

> "But they
> Regard her not ;—oh, better wrong and strife,
> Better vain deeds or evil than such life !
> The silent heavens have goings on ;
> The stars have tasks—but these have none."

When the first recast of this passage was made, the last two lines were still retained in conjunction with some added lines of inferior quality, but finally they were altogether excluded, and the poem closes with a half-apology for the tawny wanderers :—

> "They are what their birth
> And breeding suffer them to be :
> Wild outcasts of society."

Now we do not take too generous a view of human intelligence when we say that several thousands of men, women, and children could at the present moment utter, if need were, this very obvious reflection. But who at any time, except Wordsworth, could have written the words,

> "The silent heavens have goings on" ?

And for this reason they must not pass from our memory.

"Beggars," a poem for which Wordsworth had a special regard, underwent so many rehandlings, and

the details of these are so perplexing, that it is impossible to put them here before the reader. He would do well to compare the states of the poem in 1807 (or 1815) with those of 1820, 1827, and 1832. It will be seen that the long drab-coloured cloak of the majestic beggar, after becoming a blue mantle, finally descended to her feet with a graceful flow. The lines,

> "Haughty, as if her eye had seen
> Its own light to a distance thrown,"

replace others more simple, less grand; the stanza which compares the boys to "precursors of Aurora's car" is an after-thought of 1827; the boys in whose "fraternal features" the poet can now trace

> "Unquestionable lines of that wild suppliant's face"

were at first two brothers,

> "eight and ten years old,
> And like that woman's face as gold is like to gold."

The changes, as will be perceived, all tend in the direction of a more dignified treatment of the subject.

The single example of absolute reversal by Wordsworth of the central motive of one of his own poems is in "Laodamia." The verbal changes, indeed, in the poem are few:—

> "The gods approve
> The depth and not the tumult of the soul,
> *The fervour—not the impotence of love,*"

stood originally where now we find "A fervent, not ungovernable love," and, influenced probably by Landor's criticism, both the first verse was recast, and those lines altered in which the shade of Protesilaus speaks,

> "As a witness, of a second birth
> For all that is most perfect upon earth."

"*Witness*" and "*second birth!*" exclaimed Landor, "however holy and venerable in themselves, come stinking and reeking to us from the conventicle." But these are matters of secondary importance. It is the reversal of the moral judgment on Laodamia's ungoverned love of her lord which we know not how to accept. Why should she, who was at first judged gently and forgiven, *quoniam dilexit multum*, be afterwards condemned to everlasting banishment in "a grosser clime, apart from happy ghosts"? By no weak pity would Wordsworth or the gods be moved for a time; after many hesitations and questionings (apparent through the altering forms of the text), it was at length decreed that the impassioned queen should not be for ever exiled from the presence of him she loved; the "grosser clime" is no longer her doom; only secluded from the spirits who gather flowers of blissful quiet she abides, wearing out her appointed time—a season of hours now no sadder than a purgatorial term.*

* See, on "Laodamia," an interesting piece of criticism in "Guesses at Truth" (Second Series), and a singularly hard, unsympathetic study by Sara Coleridge: "Memoir and Letters," vol. ii.

Mention ought perhaps to have been made of a poem never included, I believe, in any edition of Wordsworth's works, "The Installation Ode," 1847, written in compliance with a request not to be refused for the occasion of Prince Albert's Installation as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. A short and touching letter of the aged poet will be found in Mr Theodore Martin's "Life of the Prince Consort." The Ode is printed in *The Athenæum*, July 10th, 1847. Dora Quillinan, who had been for some months declining, died on July 9th. This Laureate-poem, born in sorrow, was only in part of Wordsworth's authorship; it was completed by his nephew, the late Bishop of Lincoln.

VICTORIAN LITERATURE.

THE literature of the Elizabethan age was the flowering through art of a new faith and a new joy—a faith in the spiritual truths recovered by the Reformation movement, a joy in the world of nature and of human life as presented in the magic mirror of the Renaissance. Within a decade of years having for its centre the year of Queen Elizabeth's accession, were born Sidney, Spenser, Raleigh, Chapman, Daniel, Drayton, Marlowe, Hooker, Bacon, Shakspere. Never before or since in England were such prizes drawn in the lottery of babies. Never before or since had the good fairies who bring gifts to cradles so busy a time. But it was not until Elizabeth's reign had run more than half its course, and these boys were grown to man's estate, that the great summer of literature showed its flowers and fruit. The "Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity," the six books of the "Faerie Queene," the "Essays" of Bacon, "Romeo and Juliet," "As You Like It," and "Henry V." belong to the last period of Elizabeth's reign, that which opens with the defeat of the Armada; and many writings which we commonly class under the head of Elizabethan literature—"King Lear" and "The Tempest," "The Advancement of Learning," "The History of the World," "The Alchemist" and "The Silent Woman"—are named Elizabethan only because they continue the

same literary movement and carry it on through the period which had hardly culminated before her death.

The literature of the reign of Queen Anne was the expression of the better mind of England when it had recovered itself through good sense and moderation of temper from the Puritan excess and from the Cavalier excess. Enthusiasm was discredited, and faith had no wings to soar; but it was something to have escaped the spiritual orgies of the saints and the sensual riot of the king's new courtiers; it was something to have attained to a sober way of regarding human life, and to the provisional resting-place of a philosophical and theological compromise. Addison's humane smile, Pope's ethics of good sense, and the exquisite felicity of manner in each writer, represent and justify the epoch.

Our own age has been named the *sæculum realisticum;* men of science have claimed it as their own, and countless pæans have been chanted in honour of our material and mechanical advancement. Yet it is hardly less distinguished by its ardours of hope and aspiration, by its eager and anxious search for spiritual truth, by its restlessness in presence of spiritual anarchy, by its desire for some spiritual order. It has been pre-eminently an age of intellectual and moral trial, difficulty and danger; of bitter farewells to things of the past, of ardent welcomes to things as yet but dimly discerned in the coming years; of dissatisfaction with the actual and of immense desire; an age of seekers for light, each having trouble too plainly written upon his forehead.

If a precise date must be chosen separating the present period of literature from that which immediately pre-

cedes it, we shall do well to fix on the year 1832. In that year the Bill for the representation of the people placed the future destiny of England in the hands of the middle classes, and a series of social and political reforms speedily followed. In that year died a great imaginative restorer of the past, and also a great intellectual pioneer of the future. Amid his nineteenth-century feudalisms, within sound of the old Border river, Scott passed away, murmuring to himself, as he lay in his bed, some fragment of the Litany or verse from the venerable hymns of the Romish ritual. On an autumn evening his body was laid in the resting-place of his forefathers amid the monastic ruins of Dryburgh. It was in London, just at the close of a fierce political struggle, that Jeremy Bentham died. To the last he had been "codifying like any dragon"; when he heard the verdict of his physician, that death was inevitable, the cheerful utilitarian thought first of a practical application of his own doctrine. "Very well," he said serenely, "be it so; then minimise pain," and so departed, leaving his viscera to be dissected for the benefit of mankind, and his skeleton when duly arrayed to do the honours at University College.

By the year 1832 the flood-tide of English poetry had withdrawn from the shores which had lightened and sung with the splendour and music of the earlier days of the century. It was eleven years since Keats had found rest in the flowery cemetery at Rome; ten years since Shelley, in a whirl of sea-mist, had solved the great mystery that had haunted him since boyhood. Byron's memory was still a power, but a power that constantly

waned. Southey had forsaken poetry, and was just now rejoicing over the words, *Laus Deo,* written on the last page of his "History of the Peninsular War;" surely at last those "subsecive hours" were at hand in which he might bring to a fruitful outcome the great labour of two-and-thirty years, his never-to-be-written "History of Portugal." It was in 1832 that Wordsworth, conscious of the loss of the glory and the freshness of his earlier manhood, and conscious also that he had never forfeited a poet's prerogative, wrote those lines prefixed to his complete works, in which he exhorts the heaven-inspired singer to fidelity and contentment, whether he shine as a great star in the zenith or burn like an untended watch-fire on the ridge of some dark mountain :—

> "If thou, indeed, derive thy light from Heaven,
> Then, to the measure of that heaven-born light,
> Shine, Poet! in thy place, and be content."

Few of Wordsworth's poems of later date than 1832 can be said to dart their beams with planetary influence from the zenith. Yet there is no fond self-pity in his lines, as there are in those which Coleridge, compassed about with infirmity, printed in that same year, 1832, in *Blackwood's Magazine,* under the title "The Old Man's Sigh" :—

> "Where no hope is, life's a warning
> That only serves to make us grieve
> In our old age,
> Whose bruised wings quarrel with the bars of the still
> narrowing cage." *

* The text was afterwards altered, and the poem was made a portion of "Youth and Age."

Coleridge, indeed, had but a brief waiting before release from the cage was granted him. "Saw Coleridge in bed," writes Crabb Robinson (April 12, 1832). "He looked beautifully—his eye remarkably brilliant —and he talked as eloquently as ever." The voyager through strange seas of thought still held men with his glittering eye and told his tale of wonder, but his voyaging and his work were indeed over. This year, 1832, which we have taken as the line of division between Victorian literature and that of the first literary period of the nineteenth century, was also the year of the death of an illustrious poet whose earlier verses had delighted Burke and won the approval of Johnson, and whose later writings were celebrated by Byron and had been the solace of Scott's dying days. Crabbe, whose life and poetry thus served to link together two widely different epochs of literature, touched the boundary of a third era, but his foot was not permitted to pass beyond the limit.

A student of the poetry of the age of Elizabeth who happens to be also a reader of the poetry of our own time, can hardly fail to be impressed by one important point of contrast between these two bodies of literature. The poets of the Elizabethan age—excepting, perhaps, Spenser—seem to have got on very happily and successfully without theories of human life or doctrines respecting human society; but our nineteenth-century poets are almost all sorely puzzled about certain problems of existence, and, having laboured at their solution, come forward with some lightening of the burden of the mystery, with some hope or some solace; or else they

deliberately and studiously turn away from this spiritual travail, not without an underlying consciousness that such turning away is treasonable, to seek for beauty or pleasure or repose. In those strenuous days of the English Renaissance, so full of resolution and energy and achievement, when a broad, healthy, mundane activity replaced the intensity and wistfulness and passion of mediæval religion and the exaltations of chivalry; when the world grew spacious and substantial, when mirth was open and unashamed, and when the tragedy of life consisted in positive wrestling of man with man and of nation with nation—in those days there was an absorbing interest in action and the tug of human passions; the vital relation of man with man in mutual love or conflict was that which the imagination of the period delighted to present to itself; it was the age of the drama, and men did not pause in the career of living to devise systems or theories or doctrines of life. But the unity of national thought and feeling ceased when Puritan stood over against Anglican and Roundhead against Cavalier. It became necessary to pause and consider and decide. A youth of fine moral temper coming to manhood when Milton wrote his "Comus," had a choice to make—a choice between two doctrines in religion, two parties in the State, two principles of human conduct. Instead of that free abandonment to the action and passion of the world, characteristic of the Elizabethan period, there was now a self-conscious pursuit of certain ideals—an ideal of loyalty to Church and Crown, with grace and gallantry and wit, or else the stern Puritan ideals—the vigorous liberty of a Republic; the Church,

a congregation of saints; and a severity and grave majesty of personal character. Milton is deeply interested in providing himself and others with a moral rule of life, and with some doctrine which shall explain the mysteries of existence. He must needs get some answer to the *why* and *wherefore*, the *whence* and *whither* of the world. Shakspere had cared to see what things are, all of pity and terror, all of beauty and mirth, that human life contains—Lear in the storm, and Falstaff in the tavern, and Perdita among her flowers. He had said, "These things are," and had refused to put the question, "How can these things be?" Milton, on the contrary, in the forefront of his epic, announces with the confidence of a great dogmatist that, aided by Divine illumination, he aspires "to justify the ways of God to man."

Our own age is and has been, in a far profounder sense than the term can be applied to the age of Milton, an age of revolution. Society, founded on the old feudal doctrines, has gone to wreck in the storms that have blown over Europe during the last hundred years. A new industrial and democratic period has been inaugurated; already the interregnum of government by the middle classes has proved its provisional character. But the social and political forms suitable to this new epoch are as yet unorganised, and perhaps have not as yet been truly conceived. The contributions towards an ideal reconstruction of society by Fourier, by Robert Owen, by Auguste Comte, by Lasalle and Karl Marx, testify to the profound dissatisfaction of aspiring minds with the present chaos of our social and political rela-

tions; and we have seen within the last few years that masses of men, filled with discontent and immoderate hopes that spring from the ashes of despair, are dangerously eager to turn into actual experiment the immature ideas of the thinkers. What we want before all else is a true thought, or body of organic thoughts, large and reasonable, which shall include all the conditions of our case.

Then again it is evident that a prolonged testing of religious ideas has been going forward. Theology, once the science of sciences, is said to be superseded, and in its place we have got a "science of religions." God, to whom once all highest hopes and fears tended and were referred, the living God whom man, His creature, might love and adore and obey, has been superannuated, and we are requested to cultivate henceforth enthusiasm on behalf of "a stream of tendency" which "makes for righteousness." Or perhaps it is more in harmony with the principles of a scientific age to direct our devout emotions to the great ensemble of humanity: "O ensemble of humanity, thou art my ensemble; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Or yet again may it not be that we can dispense with this awkward ensemble—a leviathan of pettinesses—and recognising the existence of an Unknowable, may possess in that recognition the essence of all religions: "Sing unto the Unknowable, O ye saints of its, and give thanks at the remembrance of its unknowableness."

It takes a little time and some tuning of the ear before we can feel that the new psalmody is quite as

happy in its phrasing as the old. The revolution or threatened revolution in the religious order seems to us no less real and no less important than that in the political and social order. In truth, not a conception of any kind respecting the world and man and the life of man remains what it was a century since. Science sapping in upon every side of human thought and feeling, is effecting in our views of the individual and of the race a modification as startling as that effected in cosmical conceptions by the discovery of Copernicus that this earth is not the centre of the universe, but one orb among its brother orbs in a system too vast and glorious for imagination to comprehend. The past of humanity has expanded from the six thousand years of the old biblical chronologists to measureless aeons of time; the sense of the myriad, intimate relations between the present and all this past has grown strong within us, perhaps tyrannously strong; while, at the same time, it is impossible to restrain the imagination from a forward gaze into futurity, which seems to open a vista as remote and unfathomable as the past. We were once apes or ascidians, therefore we shall some day be the angels of this earth.* Since Cordorcet speculated and

* Or possibly crows. "'You must read the "Revelations of Chaos,"' said Lady Constance to Tancred," in Disraeli's novel; "'it is all explained. But what is most interesting is the way in which man has been developed. You know, all is development. The principle is perpetually going on. First, there was nothing, then there was something; then, I forget the next, I think there were shells, then fishes; then we came, let me see, did we come next? Never mind that; we came at last. And the next change there will be something very superior to us, something with wings. Ah! that's it: we were fishes, and I believe we shall be crows. But you must read it.' 'I do not believe I ever was a fish,' said Tancred."

since Shelley sang, there have been wild hopes of human perfectability in the prophetic soul of the world dreaming of things to come; and in soberness and truth there has grown up a general confidence in a progress of mankind towards good, which seems to be justified by the most careful scrutiny of the past history of humanity from primitive barbarism to the present imperfect forms of civilisation. If, moreover, the conviction that we and all that surrounds us have been so largely determined by the past sometimes weighs on us with tyranous power, the thought that we in our turn are shaping the destinies of future generations becomes a moral motive of almost irresistible force, compelling us to high resolve and dutiful action.

The stress of the spiritual and social revolution has been widely felt during the second half of the last fifty years; the twenty-five years which preceded these were a period of comparative tranquillity, a period during which the vast additions made to the means and appliances of living somewhat hid out of view the dangers and difficulties of life itself from eyes that did not possess the true seer's vision. The ten-pound householder had his vote; slavery was abolished in the colonies; the evils of pauperism were met by a Poor Law; the bread-tax was abolished; the people were advancing in education; useful knowledge was made accessible in cheap publications; a man could travel forty miles in the time in which his father could have travelled ten; more iron, more coal, was dug out of the earth; more wheels were whirling, more shuttles flew, more looms rattled, more cotton was spun, more cloth was sold.

The statistics of progress were surely enough to intoxicate with joy a lover of his species.

The sanguine temper of the period and its somewhat shallow, material conception of human welfare, are well represented in the writings of Macaulay. Incomparably great as an accumulator, arranger, and setter-forth of knowledge, he must accept a subordinate place if judged by spiritual standards. Prosperous himself through all his years, which marched with the years of the century, never troubled by inward doubt and perplexity or falterings of heart, never borne away by eager aspirations towards some unattainable spiritual perfection, Macaulay loved his age as a good boy might love an indulgent mother, who gave no end of cakes and pocket-money, and was jolly to all the other fellows as well as to himself. And the mother was justly proud of her vigorous, kindly, cheerful, clever son. How much to her liking was that contrast between the Platonic and the Baconian philosophy: "An acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia. The smallest actual good is better than the most magnificent promises of impossibilities. The wise man of the Stoics would, no doubt, be a grander object than a steam-engine. But there are steam-engines. And the wise man of the Stoics is yet to be born." And a thousand readers huzzaed and tossed up their caps for the steam-engine, and held Plato and Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus cheap. Southey, comparing the old cottages of the English peasantry, the solid weather-stained material, the ornamented chimneys, round or square, the hedge of clipt box beneath the windows, the rose-bushes beside the door, the little

patch of flower-ground with its tall hollyhocks in front, the orchard with its bank of daffodils and snowdrops—Southey, comparing these with the new cottages of the manufacturers built upon the manufacturing pattern, naked and in a row, had asked, "How is it that everything which is connected with manufactures presents such features of unqualified deformity?"—a question which Mr Ruskin and Mr William Morris, and in his own way Mr Frederic Harrison, are asking to-day. And Macaulay answered with a contemptuous snort, "Here is wisdom. Here are principles on which nations are to be governed. Rose-bushes and poor-rates, rather than steam-engines and independence." Huzza! therefore, once more for the steam-engine; all is going on beautifully with England: *laisser faire, laisser aller*. "It is not by the intermeddling of Mr Southey's idol, the omniscient and omnipotent state, but by the prudence and energy of the people, that England has hitherto been carried forward in civilisation, and it is to the same prudence and the same energy that we now look with comfort and good hope." Truly the whirligig of time has brought Southey and the provident, though not omniscient or omnipotent, state their revenge.

Tender regrets for the past, for the age when English hands could rear the Cathedral, when English hearts could lift one common hymn of faith and praise, are, if we may trust Macaulay, the follies of the sentimentalist. In those ages "noblemen were destitute of comforts the want of which would be intolerable to a modern footman, farmers and shopkeepers breakfasted on loaves the very sight of which would raise a riot in a modern

workhouse." But if it be folly to chase backward through time a vanishing mirage, we may confidently look forward to a golden age in the near future—a golden age of more abundant beef and richer pudding. "It may well be, in the twentieth century, that the peasant of Dorsetshire may think himself miserably paid with fifteen shillings a week; that the carpenter at Greenwich may receive ten shillings a day; that labouring men may be as little used to dine without meat as they now are to eat rye-bread." Why let fancy thus halt upon the borders of the terrestrial paradise? Why not imagine the twenty-first century, when the carpenter may receive a pound a day, and have butcher's meat at dinner, breakfast, and tea? In May, 1851, Macaulay visited the great Exhibition, and strolled for a long time under its glass and iron through acres of glorified shops. "Crystal Palace—bless the mark!—is fast getting ready," Carlyle had written in his diary a few days before this; "and bearded figures already grow frequent on the streets; 'all nations' crowding to us with their so-called industry or ostentatious frothery. All the loose population of London pours itself every holiday into Hyde Park round this strange edifice. . . . My mad humour is urging me to flight from this monstrous place." "I went to the Exhibition," writes Macaulay, "and lounged there during some hours. I never knew a sight which extorted from all ages, classes, and nations, such unanimous and genuine admiration. I felt a glow of eloquence, or something like it, come on me from the mere effect of the place." And again, on the opening day: "I made my way into the building; a most

gorgeous sight; vast, graceful, beyond the dreams of the Arabian romances. I cannot think that the Cæsars ever exhibited a more splendid spectacle. I was quite dazzled, and I felt as I did on entering St Peter's." Brilliant and indefatigable son of an age of commerce and middle-class ascendancy! his eloquent pages would nowhere else read so well as under those best of iron girders, beneath the splendours of the largest plate-glass, and amid such decorations, and art, and industry—where nothing nestles or lurks, but all is set forth for display—as were the glory and delight of the year 1851.

Macaulay, the historian of the first Victorian period, with his company of brilliant actors and his splendid spectacle, had but one rival in popularity, and that rival, the novelist of the period, exhibits with equal force, in his own province of literature, the characteristics of the time, its sanguine temper, its *bourgeois* ideals. To have awakened the laughter of innumerable readers during half a century is to have been no slight benefactor of the world; and 1886, the jubilee year of Pickwick, ought to have been celebrated with bumpers and exuberant mirth. England, the "weary Titan" of Mr Arnold's majestic simile, is all the better in health for having had to hold her sides with glee. And the tears that have been shed for little Nell and Paul Dombey and Tiny Tim have been a kindly dew, laying some of the dust of the world. And yet the accusations of melodrama, of pseudo-pathos, of overwrought caricature, have been brought against Dickens not unjustly. We have known a nobler laughter than his, and tears more

sacred. The laughter of one whose vision embraces the deepest and highest facts of life has in it a lyrical purity and passion which uplift the spirit as the laughter of Dickens never can; in such mirth there is no loose squandering of the heart, no orgy of animal spirits, nor does it spring from a perception of trivial incongruities; there is nothing in it of the mere grin; it is exquisite, refined, radiant, because it grows from a hidden root of severity. Such is the mirth of Shakspere's "Tempest" and the "Winter's Tale," following hard upon his "King Lear" and "Othello." And in the tears of one who has conversed with the soul in the great moments of its fate there is no moisture of sentimentalism. The pathos is divested of all prettiness; it is more than an affair of the nerves, or even of the heart. It is at its highest the exquisite spiritual pity, allied with the unfaltering justice, of Dante. We rejoice that Dickens should have quickened the sensibility of the English middle class for the trials and sufferings and sorrows of the poor; we rejoice that he should have gladdened the world with inexhaustible comedy and farce. But it were better if he had discovered that for man and the life of man there is something needful over and above good spirits, a sufficient dinner, and overflowing good-nature. His ideal of human happiness was that of his readers; their middle-class notions of human well-being and of what is most admirable in character he gave them back, animated by his own vigorous animal spirits—that superabundant vitality which, when he wrote the name "Charles Dickens," produced such a whirl of flourishes before the pen could rest. Banish from earth some few

monsters of selfishness, malignity, and hypocrisy, set to rights a few obvious imperfections in the machinery of society, inspire all men with a cheery benevolence, and everything will go well with this excellent world of ours. Such in brief was the teaching delivered by Dickens to his time, and he claimed to be regarded as a teacher. But let us rather choose to think of him as a widener of our sympathies, and as a creator of comic and sentimental types; then we shall see a whole population gather for his defence, and—*place aux dames*—Sairey Gamp, armed in his cause, it is who leads the van.

There is no sense of dissatisfaction with himself in what Dickens writes. How should one tingling with life to the finger-tips be displeased with his own personality? And, setting aside certain political or social inconveniences, "circumlocution offices," and such like, clearly capable of amendment, there was, in Dickens's view, nothing profoundly ailing with society. Thackeray had a quarrel with himself and a quarrel with society; but his was not a temper to push things to extremes. He could not acquiesce in the ways of the world, its shabbiness, its shams, its snobbery, its knavery; he could not acquiesce, and yet it is only for born prophets to break with the world and go forth into the wilderness crying, "Repent!" Why affect to be a prophet, and wear camels' hair and eat locusts and wild honey, adding one more sham to the many, when after all the club is a pleasant lounge, and anthropology is a most attractive study? Better patch up a truce with the world, which will not let one be a hero, but is not wholly evil; the great criminals are few; men in general are rather

weak than wicked; vain and selfish, but not malignant. It is infinitely diverting to watch the ways of the petty human animal. One can always preserve a certain independence by that unheroic form of warfare suitable to an unheroic age—satire; one can even in a certain sense stand above one's own pettiness by virtue of irony; and there is always the chance of discovering some angel wandering unrecognised among the snobs and the flunkeys in the form of a brave, simple-hearted man or pure-souled, tender woman. Whether right or wrong, this compromise with the world is only for a few days. Heigh-ho! everything hastens to the common end—*vanitas vanitatum.*

The morality of this compromise with the world is fully discussed by Thackeray himself in his "Pendennis," and he arrives at no decisive result. Mr Pen is on terms of friendship with the great Simpson of the Royal Gardens of Vauxhall, and shakes the lovely equestrian of the arena by the hand:—.

"And while he could watch the grimaces or the graces of those with a satiric humour that was not deprived of sympathy, he could look on with an eye of kindness at the lookers-on too; at the roystering youth bent upon enjoyment, and here taking it; at the honest parents, with their delighted children laughing and clapping their hands at the show; at the poor outcasts, whose laughter was less innocent though perhaps louder, and who brought their shame and their youth here, to dance and be merry till the dawn at least, and to get bread and drown care. Of this sympathy with all conditions of men, Arthur often boasted; he was pleased to possess it, and said that he hoped thus to the last he should retain it. As another man has an ardour for art or music, or natural science, Mr Pen said that anthropology was his favourite pursuit, and had his eyes always eagerly opened to its infinite varieties and beauties; contemplating with an unfailing delight all specimens of it in all places to which he resorted, whether it was the coquet-

ting of a wrinkled dowager in a ballroom or a high-bred young beauty blushing in her prime there; whether it was a hulking guardsman coaxing a servant-girl in the park—or innocent little Tommy that was feeding the ducks while the nurse listened. And, indeed, a man whose heart is pretty clean can indulge in this pursuit with an enjoyment that never ceases, and is only perhaps the more keen because it is secret and has a touch of sadness in it; because he is in his mood and humour lonely, and apart although not alone."

Over against which there is the author's manly warning:—

"If seeing and acknowledging the lies of the world, Arthur, as see them you can with only too fatal a clearness, you submit to them without any protest farther than a laugh; if, plunged yourself in easy sensuality, you allow the whole wretched world to pass by you unmoved; if the fight for the truth is taking place, and all men of honour are on the ground armed on the one side or the other, and you alone are to lie on your balcony and smoke your pipe out of the noise and the danger—you had better have died, or never been at all, than such a sensual coward."

But Arthur has ready a reply which serves his purpose at least for the moment.

At a time when there is no dominant faith, no rule of life, no compelling ardour, no ordered, marching army of men where each one of us may fall into the ranks and obey his leader's command, what more natural than that the individual, oppressed by a sense of his own powerlessness, should come to terms with the world, and should compensate himself as a suborned revolter by irony and satire. The worst evil is that such a compromise with the world breeds a spirit of fatalism and saps the force of the will; to yield to circumstance, to accept one's environment seems inevitable; and men forget that in every complex condition of life we are

surrounded by a hundred possible environments, and that it lies with ourselves to choose whether we shall see our neighbours over the way, or an encompassing great cloud of witnesses who gather and gaze around us.

Thackeray had not the austerity and lonely strength needful for a prophet; he would not be a pseudo-prophet; therefore he chose his part—to remain in the world, to tolerate the worldlings, and yet to be their adversary and circumventer, or at least a thorn in their sides. Two men, whose influence extends over the full half-century, of whom one happily remains among us still, were true nineteenth-century sons of the prophets, who would make no compromises, and each in his own way lifted up a solitary voice crying repentance and terror and judgment to come. "In Oriel Lane," writes the late Professor of Poetry at Oxford, Principal Shairp, "light-hearted undergraduates would drop their voices and whisper, 'There's Newman!' when, head thrust forward, and gaze fixed as though on some vision seen only by himself, with swift, noiseless step he glided by. Awe fell on them for a moment as if it had been some apparition that had passed." And another Oxford Professor of Poetry, Mr Matthew Arnold, writes in a like strain: "Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music—subtle, sweet, mournful? I seem to hear him still, saying: 'After the fever of life, after wearinesses and sicknesses, fightings and despondings, languor and fretfulness,

struggling and succeeding; after all the changes and chances of this troubled, unhealthy state,—at length comes death, at length the white throne of God, at length the beatific vision.'"

Mr Arnold dwells on the charm and magic of the preacher's person and manner, because for him the name of Cardinal Newman is a great name to the imagination, but the solution adopted by Newman for the doubts and difficulties which beset men's minds to-day, "to speak frankly, is impossible." They alone could feel the full force of Newman's words who believed that he spoke to them of the most glorious and the most awful of all realities. He stood in the pulpit of St Mary's to tell of a hidden life which is the only veritable life of man; to tell of an invisible world which is more real, intimate, and enduring than the world of the senses. Once in the year this visible earth manifests its hidden powers; "then the leaves come out, and the blossoms on the fruit-trees and flowers, and the grass and corn spring up. There is a sudden rush and burst outwardly of that hidden life which God has lodged in the material world." So it shall be one day with the invisible world of light and glory—when God gives the word. "A world of saints and angels, a glorious world, the palace of God, the mountain of the Lord of Hosts, the heavenly Jerusalem, the throne of God and Christ, all these wonders, everlasting, all-precious, mysterious, and incomprehensible lie hid in what we see. What we see is the outward shell of an eternal kingdom, and on that kingdom we fix the eyes of our faith. Shine forth, O Lord, as when on Thy Nativity Thine Angels visited the

shepherds; let Thy glory blossom forth as bloom and foliage on the trees; change with Thy mighty power this visible world into that divine world, which as yet we see not; destroy what we see, that it may pass and be transformed into what we believe."

Newman and those who thought with him had little friendly feeling for the Puritans of the seventeenth century. It was noted by Clough in 1838 that assent could hardly be obtained at Oxford to an assertion of Milton's greatness as a poet. Yet Newman was indeed in one sense, and a very real sense, a Puritan of the nineteenth century. He rose in the pulpit of St Mary's not only to rebuke the worldliness of the world but to protest against the religion of the day, which had dropped one whole side of the Gospel—its austere character; which included "no true fear of God, no fervent zeal for his honour, no deep hatred of sin, no horror at the sight of sinners, no indignation and compassion at the blasphemies of heretics, no jealous adherence to doctrinal truth, no especial sensitiveness about the particular means of gaining ends, if only the ends be good, no loyalty to the Holy Apostolic Church of which the Creed speaks, no sense of the authority of religion as external to the mind—in a word, no seriousness." These are the words of a Puritan—a Puritan who was also a Catholic, and here lay his power with higher minds in an age which had yielded to the sapping in of material influences, which had grown soft and self-indulgent, and which was bewildered by confused voices that seemed only to announce an intellectual anarchy. "My battle," Newman writes, "was with Liberalism; by Liberalism

I meant the anti-dogmatic principle and its developments." Peace of mind and a cheerful countenance are indeed the gifts of the gospel, but they should follow zeal and faith; they should follow a recognition of the severe and terrible side of religion. "I will not shrink from uttering my firm conviction," said Newman, "that it would be a gain to this country were it vastly more superstitious, more bigoted, more gloomy, more fierce in its religion, than at present it shows itself to be. Not, of course, that I think the tempers of mind herein implied desirable, which would be an evident absurdity, but I think them infinitely more desirable and more promising than a heathen obduracy, and a cold, self-sufficient, self-wise tranquillity." The vital question with Newman, as he himself has said, was "How were we to keep the Church from being liberalised." And the final answer was given in his own action—by accepting all truth, like a perplexed child, from the lips of the Queen of Saints, the Holy Roman Church, the mother of us all. "I come," he might have exclaimed, like Charles Reding of his own "Loss and Gain," "O, mighty Mother, I come, but I am far from home. Spare me a little; I come with what speed I may, but I am slow of foot, and not as others, O mighty Mother." In the divine darkness of her bosom there was rest. Those who look upon Newman's solution of the difficulties of our time as an impossible solution need hardly trouble themselves with his singular reasonings. The title of the fifth chapter of his "Autobiography," "Position of my mind since 1845," will suffice—as if during half of a long lifetime

a position were desirable for a thinking being rather than a progress. "From the time that I became a Catholic, of course I have no further history of my religious opinions to narrate." Of course: for the mighty mother laid her hand across the child's weary eyes, soothed him to rest with her immemorial croon, and while he slept removed the hand and fixed her bandage in its place. Yet we heretics, for whose blasphemies the zealous champion of the faith must needs feel compassion and indignation, may win from his teaching something better even than its charm and its culture; we may win a quickened sense of the reality of the invisible world, and a more strenuous resolution to live with the loins girt and the lamp lit. A young Protestant heretic from America, who prized at their true worth Cardinal Newman's "Verses on Various Occasions," took courage one day and sent a copy of that volume to the Oratory at Birmingham, with a request for the writer's autograph. It was returned with the inscription, *Viriliter age, exspectans Dominum* —words containing in little Newman's best contribution to his time; his vivid faith in a spiritual world, and the call to his fellows in an age of much material ease and prosperity to rise and quit them like men.

Our second prophet was laid to rest six years since under the green turf of Ecclefechan. A tomb of the prophet was built—built it may be with untempered mortar; and since then the amusement of his countrymen has been to pull out one stone and another, or to scribble on their surface caricatures and insolent verses.

Carlyle's prime influence was a religious one; he was

a preacher before he was a critic or an historian. James Carlyle, one of "the fighting masons of Ecclefechan," not only could lay the stones straight and firm, but, as a member of the Relief Church, had doubtless a Scottish clearness and vigour in matters of the faith, and, we are informed, loved to read old books which told of Reformation times and the deeds of the Covenanters. It was intended that Thomas, his eldest son, should be a minister of the Church. A brilliant French critic has called Carlyle a Puritan, and Carlyle himself described Puritanism as "the last of our Heroisms." His heritage of faith was indeed transformed, but it was never cast away. To view life, at times sadly, at times sternly, and always seriously, is the Puritan habit, and it was Carlyle's, only relieved by the sudden tenderness of his heart, and by his humour as an artist, often almost Aristophanic, before which the whole world would appear in a moment as a huge farce-tragedy. To bear about with us an abiding sense of the infinite issues of human existence is a part of Puritanism. Poor, indeed, is this little life of man for pleasure or for pride; yet of measureless worth, since heaven and hell environ it. Each deed, each moment is related to Eternity. God and the devil, one at odds with the other, are not names, but terrible realities; righteousness and sin stand apart from one another by the whole diameter. On whose side does each of us find himself? The many are foolish, slumbering and sleeping, hearing no cry in the night. The wise are few, ever ready, with the loins girt and the lamp lit.

But Puritanism, in its desire to fortify the moral will,

contracts the sensibilities, impoverishes the affections, averts its gaze from half of nature and of human life. How is one of stormy sensibility, to whom all of life is dear, an artist and a poet, a lover of beauty, a lover of strength even when ill-regulated, full of tenderness, pity, wrath; full also, in this new century, of new aspiring thoughts and impulses of revolt—how is such an one to be a Puritan? By his twenty-first year it had become clear to Carlyle that if he were to be a preacher he must preach another gospel than that of the Presbyterian Kirk. And in due time the authentic voice, calling him to be "a writer of books," grew audible. He must preach, if at all, through literature.

A broad way in literature for men of passionate temper had been opened by Byron. His victories had followed one another so brilliantly, so rapidly, that only one other career seemed like his—that of Napoleon. He had revolted against a society of decencies and respectability, of social hypocrisies, and moral cant; and with that revolt Carlyle sympathised. He had known the fever of a deep unrest; he had been miserable among negations and extinct faiths; with such unrest, such misery, Carlyle was not unacquainted. In Byron he recognised a certain desperate sincerity, underlying all superficial insincerities. Yet for one who had learnt that "man's chief end is to glorify God," who had heard of obedience to a divine will, of service to a divine King, Byron's egoistic revolt, though of service as a protest against the false, seemed to go but a little way towards attaining the liberty of true spiritual manhood. Is no better way possible? Is a religious freedom un-

attainable? Is it possible to be "a clear and universal man," and at the same time a man of faith? Carlyle, like Teufelsdröckh, closed his Byron: like Teufelsdröckh, he opened his Goethe. And in Goethe he found his own problem and the problem of his time solved. "The question," he writes in his essay on Goethe's works, "Can man still live in devoutness, yet without blindness or contraction; in unconquerable steadfastness for the right, yet without tumultuous exasperation against the wrong; an antique worthy, yet with the expansion and increased endowment of a modern? is no longer a question, but has become a certainty and ocularly visible fact."

Puritanism had said "Live resolutely for God in what is good," but Puritanism had narrowed the meaning of the word "good" as Carlyle henceforth could not narrow it; Puritanism had renounced the experiment of entering the kingdom of heaven otherwise than maimed and blind. Goethe said, "Live resolutely a complete human life, in what is good and beautiful, in the whole of things"—*Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen resolut zu leben.* So the seriousness which is at the heart of Puritanism might grow large, and free, and beautiful. What Carlyle wrote of Goethe was not the mere expression of a literary judgment; he wrote with the sense that it was Goethe who had made it possible for him to live. He did not approach Goethe, like poor Sterling, with questions as to his classification—Was Goethe a Pagan, or a Christian? a Pantheist, or perchance a "Pot-theist"? He found, or thought he found, in Goethe a complete, heroic, modern man. "Carlyle

breakfasted with me," wrote Crabb Robinson in 1832,

"and I had an interesting morning with him. . . . His voice and manner, and even the style of his conversation, are those of a religious zealot, and he keeps up that character in his declamations against the anti-religious. And yet, if not the god of his idolatry, at least he has a priest and prophet of his church in Goethe, of whose profound wisdom he speaks like an enthusiast. *But for him, Carlyle says, he should not now be alive. He owes everything to him!*"

Those were days of steadfast growth in the moorland solitude of Craigenputtoch, when, having conquered the egoistic despair of youth, and found in renunciation and a wise limited activity his "Everlasting Yea," Carlyle moved with a free, courageous step through untrodden regions of literature, and was for a time a prophet of joy and hope. He talked to De Quincey of founding a "Misanthropic Society," its members uniting to "hurl forth their defiance, pity, expostulation over the whole universe, civil, literary, and religious." But in truth he was no Timon; around him was the solitude which nourished his soul—

"a solitude altogether Druidical—grim hills tenanted chiefly by wild grouse, tarns and brooks that have soaked and slumbered unmolested since the deluge of Noah, and nothing to disturb you with speech, except Arcturus and Orion, and the Spirit of Nature, in the heaven and in the earth, as it manifests itself in anger or love, and utters its inexplicable tidings, unheard by the mortal ear."

But, adds this misanthrope, "the misery is the almost total want of colonists." Yet, when he returned to his fireside, there was sufficient human society in the wife, whose "soft invincibility, capacity of discernment, and noble loyalty of heart," were, in spite of all imperfections

of sympathy, to stand him in stead during forty years; in her, and in that pile upon his library table, eyed with the pride of a young literary athlete—"such a quantity of German periodicals and mystic speculation, embosomed in plain Scottish *Peat-moor*, being nowhere else that I know of to be met with."

In temperament Carlyle differed widely from his master, Goethe. When he came from his northern solitude to London his age was the same as that of Goethe in the year of his return from Italy to Weimar. In solitude or congenial society, freed from the multifarious cares of a great public servant, delivering his heart from the exaltation of an ideal passion which could not transform itself into duty and happiness nor into creative activity, surrounded by the marble aristocracy of antique art, Goethe in Rome attained a serenity of vision and a comprehensive definiteness of purpose which some have described as resulting in a cooling or chilling of his genius. Carlyle, combative as a son of one of "the fighting masons of Ecclefechan" must needs be, with stormy sensitiveness pained by all the griefs and wrongs and follies of the time, lost such serenity as had been his in his moorland home, saw in tempestuous vision the old Puritan conflict between the powers of hell and heaven renewing itself in our modern world, and could not choose but show forth his vision, announce the woes that were coming on the earth, and declare, to those who had ears to hear, the almost impossible way of salvation for society. "The savageness which has come to be a main characteristic of this singular man is, in my opinion," wrote Harriet Martineau, "a mere ex-

pression of his intolerable sympathy with the suffering." Goethe's wide and luminous view is, like that of Shakspere in his last period, a gazing down upon human life from some clear outpost on the heights. Carlyle, with marred visage and rent prophetic robe, is hurtled hither and thither in the tumult of the throng.

From the prophets we do not get the *axiomata media* of wise living, individual or social. They tell of righteousness, mercy, and judgment to come. Others of trained intelligence must apply their doctrine to life. Carlyle helped to make us feel that the chasm between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong, is sheer and of infinite depth; that all things do not of necessity tend from bad to good; that, on the contrary, bad often grows to worse; that a nation, by faithlessness and folly, may indeed go straight to the devil; that each bit of needful work done soundly, honestly, contributes to avert that catastrophe. This was an awakening piece of nineteenth-century prophecy. But how to find the truth? how to distinguish, in the complex material of life, between good and evil? how to attain the right? Worship of heroes (sometimes of questionable heroism), government by the Best (but where to find them?), drilling of Democracy (which will surely drill itself in the only effectual ways)—these suggestions did not greatly serve to make our path clear. The patient intellect of man had pursued other methods leading to other results. These were indignantly exploded by our transcendental prophet as the manufacture of logic-mills, fragments of the Dismal Science, leavings of the Pig Philosophy, wisdom of National Palaver, and

such like. Happily, it was among the elemental forces of individual character that Carlyle wrought with chief power; his influence, therefore, without losing its virtue, could submit to manifold transformations.

Carlyle's transcendentalism was part of the spirit of his time, part of the reaction moral, intellectual, and imaginative against the eighteenth century. The Carlylean transcendentalism derived its unique character from the Scottish Peat-moor, "Druidical Solitude," "speech only of Arcturus, Orion, and the Spirit of Nature"—from these mingling with influences from that pile of "German periodicals and mystic speculation" upon his library table. He needed a vast background, Immensities, Eternities, through which might wander "the passion-winged ministers of thought," Wonder, and Awe, and Adoration. But in the foreground of clear perception and sane activity, all was limited, definite, concrete. From Goethe he had learnt, what, indeed, his own shrewd Scottish head could well confirm, that to drift nowhither in the Inane is not the highest destiny of a human creature; that, on the contrary, all true expansion comes through limitation, all true freedom through obedience. Hence the rule, "Do the work that lies nearest to your hand;" hence the preciousness of any fragment of living reality, any atom of significant fact. If Carlyle was a mystic, he was a mystic in the service of what is real and positive. Still the little illuminated spot on which men toil and strive, and love and sorrow, was environed, for Carlyle's imagination, by the Immensities; the day, so bright and dear, wherein men serve or sin, was born from a deep Eternity which swiftly calls

it back, engulphs it. From which contrast between the great and the little, the transitory and the eternal, spring many sudden surprises of humour and of pathos, which at length ceases to surprise, and grow but too familiar to the reader of Carlyle.

To History, the region of positive, concrete fact, his mind gravitated. As a critic of literature, he had done signal service by showing that a passionate sympathy is often needful to attain the ends of justice. The essays on Burns and Johnson are illuminated by fine intelligence, yet less by intelligence than by pity, reverence, and love. While scornfully intolerant of dilettantism and "the poor Fine Arts" founded on unveracity, Carlyle had done much to introduce into England the Continental feeling for art and the artist as important factors in human society; but the art of which he spoke must be one founded on true insight into man's life and genuine belief; the artist must possess something more than manipulative dexterity; he must be in some measure a *vates*, whose conscious activity has, underlying it, a deep, unconscious energy. As a literary critic, Carlyle was sometimes perverse; he missed proportions; now and again he would resolutely invert things, and hold them up to mockery, in grotesque disarray. A certain leaven of Puritanism made him impatient of some harmless wiles and graceful pastimes of "the poor Fine Arts."

A poet of our century, who was also one of its most admirable prose writers, has told in verse the reproof which he received as rhymer from "Clio, the strong-eyed Muse." History pleased Carlyle, for its matter is robust,

and yet it may be steeped in sentiment. What he could not endure was to attenuate history to a theory, or to relegate its living, breathing actors to a classification. He would fain lift up a piece of the past whole and unbroken, as a fragment of veritable human experience, with its deep inarticulate suggestions to the conscience and the will. Nothing should be lost, except what is unvital, mere wrappage and encumbrance of history. Working as an artist, with an idea of the whole, and a genius for distinguishing essentials from non-essentials in the myriad of details, the historian must attempt the almost impossible feat of rivalling reality, of presenting things in succession so that they may live in the imagination as simultaneous, since once they were so in fact; of presenting a *series* so that it may be recognised as a *group*. Much that is characteristic in Carlyle's work as historian has its origin in the marvellously quick and keen glance of his eye, his power of reading off some minute visible incident into its invisible meaning, and thus interpreting character by picturesque signs and symbols, together with the studiously elaborated style which quickens and exalts the reader's sensitiveness almost to the point of disease, playing upon every nerve-centre with snapping sparks of a new kind of electricity, until he tingles between pleasure and pain. The strain in Carlyle's writing is caused by his desperate resolve to produce in narrative, which, as he says, is *linear*, the effect of action, which is *solid*. "It is not in acted as it is in written History: actual events are nowise so simply related to each other as parent and offspring are; every single

event is the offspring not of one but of all other events, prior or contemporaneous, and will in its turn combine with all others to give birth to new: it is an ever-living, ever-working Chaos of Being, wherein shape after shape bodies itself forth from innumerable elements." In other writers we may read more correctly the causes and the effects of the French Revolution. If we would feel the suck of the maëlstrom and explore its green-glimmering terror we must accompany Carlyle.

In whatever else Carlyle may have failed, he did not fail in impressing on those who took his teaching to heart a sense of the momentous issues of the time; a sense that a great social revolution was in progress; that it was attended with stupendous dangers, and called before all else for loyal, obedient, faithful, God-fearing men. He would, if it were possible, have helped to discipline and train a regiment of modern Ironsides, and then have trusted to God to send a Cromwell to be their leader. He could not huzza for steam-engines, cotton, and oil, and coal, Crystal Palaces, the machinery or the shows of society, while society itself was ailing at the heart. Reverence, obedience, spiritual insight, fidelity to duty, honest work—did England possess more or less of these? If less, how vain and wicked was the modern cant of Progress? Progress—yes, progress towards the devil and the black pit of Gehenna.

Mr John Morley has spoken of Carlyle's method for ascertaining truth as the method of Rousseau. "Each bids us look within our own bosoms for truth and right, postpones reason to feeling, and refers to introspection and a factitious something called Nature, questions only

to be truly solved by external observation and history." And as it were in contrast with such a method leading only to pseudo-wisdom, we are told that the force of Mr Mill's character and teaching lay in that "combination of an ardent interest in human improvement with a reasoned attention to the law of its conditions, which alone deserves to be honoured with the high name of wisdom." But Carlyle, in truth, inspected society with a penetrating vision, and the observation of Mr Mill—earnest, disinterested, admirable student as he was—too frequently is that of a one-eyed observer, or a man born colour-blind.* How should one whose feelings had never been cultivated in childhood and youth observe truly? Mr Mill reasoned; his reasonings were based on the principle that the individual must take the general happiness as his ultimate end; and the reasoner is compelled to admit that questions of ultimate ends do not admit of proof in the straightforward sense of the term. He, the philosophical guide of the Liberal party, observed and reasoned, and produced a Political Economy; and who have banished the orthodox Political Economy to Saturn and Jupiter? No; Mr Mill too often observed insufficiently, or reasoned imperfectly, or started from principles too hastily assumed. Carlyle brought, at least, the complete nature

* Dr Ingram, a writer of sounder judgment than Mr Morley, has well said in his article "Political Economy" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica:* "Mill's openness to new ideas and his enthusiasm for improvements cannot be too much admired. But there appear to have been, combined with these fine traits in his mental constitution, a certain want of practical sense, a failure to recognise and acquiesce in the necessary conditions of human life, and a craving for better bread than can be made of wheat."

of a devout and passionate man to the aid of observing powers of extraordinary keenness and penetration. And, as regards the elementary truths of human life, not without effect. Mr Froude, in a remarkable passage, has described the influence of Carlyle's writings on young men who felt painfully the trouble and difficulty of the time, and were agreed to have done with compromise and conventionalities. "To the young, the generous, to everyone who took life seriously, who wished to make an honourable use of it, and could not be content with making money, his words were like the morning reveille." "Carlyle's doctrine," says Mr Morley, "has all its foundations in the purest individualism." No; it is empirical utilitarianism, confessing that it cannot prove anything with respect to ultimate ends, which cannot pass beyond individualism; and Carlyle's doctrine has its roots in God—in God, not to be revealed after death, in a beatific vision seated upon the great white throne, but here and now, in his world of sinning, toiling, suffering, striving men and women. "It is to you, ye workers," he writes, "who do already work, and are as grown men, noble and honourable in a sort, that the whole world calls for new work and nobleness. Subdue mutiny, discord, wide-spread despair, by manfulness, justice, mercy, and wisdom. Chaos is dark, deep as Hell; let light be, and there is instead a green flowery world. Oh, it is great, and there is no other greatness. To make some nook of God's Creation a little fruitfuller, better, more worthy of God; to make some human hearts a little wiser, manfuller, happier, more blessed, less accursed!" Such words as these,

and the words—so different and yet not wholly alien—from the pulpit of St Mary's, affected young and ardent spirits as words of genuine prophecy. "Early in the eighteen-forties," writes Principal Shairp, "when the 'Miscellanies' appeared, and became known to undergraduates here at Oxford, I remember how they reached the more active-minded, one by one, and thrilled them as no printed book ever before had thrilled them." And Mr Froude's confession will not be forgotten: "I, for one (if I may so far speak of myself) was saved by Carlyle's writings from Positivism, or Romanism, or Atheism, or any other of the creeds or no-creeds which in those days were whirling us about in Oxford like leaves in an autumn storm."

Organisation of labour, if well understood, said Carlyle, is the problem of the whole future. A practical attempt towards its solution was made by Maurice, Kingsley, Mr Ludlow, and others, who took the name of "Christian Socialists," and, having little in common with what now styles itself Socialism, beyond a sympathy with the hardships and wrongs of the toiling thousands, maintained as early as 1849 the principle of co-operation as opposed to competition. The literary side of the movement is represented by the disciple, Kingsley, rather than by the master, Maurice. In the gospel which Kingsley preached in tale and sermon there was none of what Mr Maurice described as Carlyle's wild pantheistic rant, the "big inanity of Pantheism." He spoke of the fatherhood of God, and of the union of all men in and through Jesus Christ; and yet the old phrases seemed to be inspired with a new

life and meaning. Temper had something to do with the effect produced by Kingsley's words: they were uttered in a voice so ringing and hearty that we felt them to be a portion of his very life. No spiritual man at the time seemed to have in him so much of the natural man, no natural man seemed to have so much of the spiritual man, as Kingsley.* Our Bible grew dearer to us, and our biceps. We had our modern ideals—the Chartist peer, the lord-loving democrat, the squire-priest; yet we felt ourselves far removed from Young England, and thought scorn of the stucco mediævalism of "Coningsby" and "Sybil." Viewed from our less chivalrous elder days, the enthusiasm of that time seems somewhat of an enthusiasm prepense and self-conscious; and yet it had a use and gallantry of its own. Charles Kingsley assuredly did not solve with a few hearty words the riddle of the Sphinx. He had not perhaps a single capital thought for his own age, but he brought that which is perennially fresh and inspiring—a vivid and kindling personality. Here was a human being alive at many points, with senses singularly keen, a kind of enthusiasm in the very blood, intellect quick and stirring, imagination not winged but swift of foot as a racer, a generous temper, a hand prompt in deeds of public good, and at the back of temperament a character which grew more close-knit as time went on. His teaching breathed courage, purity, love. His words rang bright and clear in the morning air. It was much to

* I make use of some portions of a review of the "Eversley Edition of Charles Kingsley's Novels," contributed by me to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Nov. 26, 1881.

proclaim in a *sæculum realisticum* that the world is sacred for those whose purpose is high. It was not useless amid a Catholic reaction and a mediæval revival to vindicate the rights of the natural man, to present ideals of a life more true to the time, more courageous and robust than that of the modern mediævalist, and to do honour to a great epoch of our national history which an attempt was made to discredit as Protestant and worldly. It was well to rouse public spirit and to set forth our duties to the toilers in great cities, even though the public spirit may have been somewhat headlong in its career. In any picture of the midmost years of the nineteenth century, the figure of Kingsley must attract attention among the high lights of the picture. With justice he was described by Mill as "a man who is himself one of the good influences of the age."

As a poet and novelist it was not wholly to Kingsley's advantage that he was also a preacher, still less that he felt called to be a preacher militant. Yet the combative spirit was part of the man; at no period could he have been one of the

> "Serene creators of immortal things;"

and without a gospel to deliver he might perhaps never have cared to be an artist. Still much of the high reserve, the mystery and the pathos of art, is lost because Kingsley has an explanation to give of all the problems of life proposed in his books. Having for his gospel the truths compendiously expressed in the formula "This world is God's world"—fearing on the one hand the risks which vigorous manhood runs from mere

animalism, and on the other hand the marsh-fires of false pietism, he constructed his tales so as to lead up to the main articles of his brief creed. The ungodly man—a Prince Wulf, a Tom Thurnell, a Hereward—lacks the very crown of manhood. Yet all good may be hoped for from a vigorous will in a vigorous body; there needs only the discovery that the natural man is not sufficient unto himself, and this discovery life is almost sure to bring at some crisis when it touches the highest of joy or anguish, and truth is struck as a spark out of darkness. For mere speculation Kingsley has small respect; it suits a time of ease, and fails men in the stress of life; the faith which will stand the test is that which some blissful or desperate experience compels into existence.

But what wrings the heart, and especially the heart of youth, so often and so sharply as a woman? Base animalism on the one hand—spurious pietism on the other—what delivers us rapturously from both one and the other like the love of a good woman? This world, "God's world"—what proves the doctrine a reality beyond gainsaying except it be the sanctity of wedded love? As Falstaff is not only witty in himself but the cause that wit is in other men, so Kingsley's heroines are not only faithful themselves but the cause that faith enters into their lovers. Hereward is lost because animalism destroys love. Raphael Aben Ezra is saved because love suddenly comes and consumes as with lightning his sceptical egoism: "To have found at last the hated and dreaded name of God; and found that it was love! To possess Victoria, a living human likeness,

however imperfect, of that God ; and to possess in her a home, a duty, a purpose, a fresh clear life of righteous labour, perhaps of final victory." And what Raphael learns from Victoria, Tom Thurnell learns in another fashion from Grace Harvey, and Alton Locke from the too edifying and didactic Lady Eleanor. Evidently, since a woman may at any moment come forward to prophesy or to enamour, everything may be hoped for from unregenerate good health. But nothing is to be hoped from, and everything is to be hated in, that false pietism which would banish woman to a cloister, and which dishonours the exercise of those natural affections whose collision strikes out the spark of divine truth.

Only in one direction is Kingsley merely a poet and not a preacher—when he is surrounded by objects which influence him and which he cannot influence, when he describes the glory and the life of river or moor or hill. Even here at times the doctrine that these ought to be enjoyed makes intrusive entry, with angry side-glances against the shame and loss of ignoble asceticism. Kingsley's delight in external nature is not that of a " wise passiveness," in which all influences of earth and sky sink deep into the soul. The joy of quick-stirring senses is met as it were by a kindred joy in the stream that sparkles, and the fish that leaps, and the wind that sings, and the clouds that fly. Lady Eleanor's harangues will survive as interesting documents for a few who study the history of the years of nineteenth century revolution. While the chalk-streams run, and the cliffs of southern England stand, there will

be living poetry for all lovers of rock and river in Kingsley's best pages.

"Alton Locke" has a social and a religious, but hardly a political purpose. The duty of the Church, as Kingsley conceived, was to serve and save the souls and bodies of men, not to advance the interests of a party in the State or of an individual man. When we read in the preface to "Coningsby" that the Church is "a sacred corporation for the promulgation and maintenance in Europe of certain Asian principles," we cannot but entertain a shrewd suspicion that one of the Asian principles was the sacred mission of the New Toryism, as led by a certain brilliant and mysterious son of Shem. It was a strange eddy of thought and feeling that caught Young England into its advancing whirl—a composition of forces resulting from the meeting of the democratic movement, the mediæval revival, the romantic movement, and some of the traditions of Toryism. As a rebuke to the materialistic temper of the middle classes, as a protest against low utilitarian views, as an exposition of the misery and seething discontent of the toiling masses, as an announcement to the English aristocrat that a new and better *rôle* was open to him than that of a Whig oligarch of the Venetian party, "Coningsby" and "Sibyl" were enlightening and effective; at the least they raised questions and provoked thought. For those who would study the workings of an extraordinary mind they must always possess a singular interest. But a political manifesto in three volumes is not a work of art, and when we come close to Sidonia and Sybil it is masks, not faces, that we see.

What light or strength have the poets of the Victorian half-century brought to serve us in our need? How are the thought and passion of the time embodied in their verse? One, who for intellectual power—no unimportant gift to a poet—may rank first, or almost first, among the poets of the period, Henry Taylor, occupied himself with the permanent and universal sources and elements of poetry, and rarely touched on ideas or emotions peculiar to his own day. Serving our country as one of her most steadfast and high-minded public servants, he gave the prose side of his mind to his official duties, and reserved its poetical side for dramatic history more on a level with Elizabethan work than any produced in England since the Elizabethan age, and for romantic comedy which might take its place by the side of any comedy written between 1600 and 1640 by any other hand than that of Shakspere. Questions of metaphysics, questions of theology, had no natural attraction for Henry Taylor's intellect, and thus he was little afflicted by some of the most distracting troubles of our time; but he had an inexhaustible interest in human character, and he gathered from action, observation, meditation, suffering, and delight a fund of moral wisdom which had in it nothing merely abstract, theoretical, or doctrinaire, and which was all available for the purposes of his art. It is impossible, perhaps, that such work should in any age be as popular as work which appeals to the peculiar tastes and feelings of the age, but it is equally impossible that it should ever decline in worth or estimation below the high level once attained. "Philip van Artevelde" and "The Virgin

Widow" will certainly interest lovers of dramatic poetry two hundred years hence no less than they interest lovers of dramatic poetry to-day, for they are wrought out of the enduring stuff of human character, out of the ever-enduring labour and sorrow and joy of the life of man.

"A resuscitated Bacon" Archbishop Whately named Henry Taylor; and that was not just, for our poet-philosopher-statesman had little of that creative genius in the speculative sphere, that luminous vision of philosophical method, that native strength of wing and wide-orbing flight over the entire field of knowledge which made Bacon one among our chief angels of light; and Bacon possessed little of Henry Taylor's tenderness and strength of feeling, or of his power of interpreting through imagination the characters and passions of men. But Whately, the editor of Bacon's "Essays," was doubtless thinking of the wisdom of life which Bacon distilled into those petty phials; and between Bacon of the "Essays" and Henry Taylor, the writer of prose, a comparison is admissible. But when Whately went on to advise Henry Taylor to do something else than write verses, and "to leave that to the women," he did not know the man whom he was addressing; for, although it was not Taylor's custom to fling a little volume of raptures or rhapsodies into the air every twelve months, the life poetic was the deepest part of his existence, and the results of that life poetic were of a kind which, while they may well please the women—especially if the women be large-brained as well as fine-hearted—are virile in the highest sense of that word.

No other eminent poet of our time—no other eminent

poet, perhaps, since Milton—nourished the life poetic from the life of affairs; and as this constituted Henry Taylor's distinction as a man, the distinction of his poetry will be found, in a great degree, in the results of this. Had his poetical gift been primarily or chiefly lyrical, it is probable that the poet in him would have been early done to death, and the ambition of a statesman might possibly have sprung from and overshadowed the youthful poet's grave. But while his temperament was emotional, his nature sympathetic, and his intellect sufficiently mobile, his gift was not that of a lyrical poet. His mind was of a slow-growing, brooding, concocting, shaping kind. Before it could reach its proper ends, it had to learn much from observation of life, to turn that learning by meditation into wisdom, to inspire that wisdom with poetic feeling, and then to restore it to the concrete world in a finer form by aid of the imagination. This was the process constantly going on, as Henry Taylor himself described it many years since: "Observation of facts; generalisation from facts observed; rejection into the concrete, but with improvements from the fancy, of the general conclusions obtained." Other poets have been engaged in public affairs; but, unaware, perhaps, of the gains they were procuring for their art, they did not strive to bring the life of action and the life of meditation into co-operative harmony. Chaucer loved the woolfells and leather of the Petty Customs only because they helped to save his purse from growing light; and he rejoiced when he could escape from his official duties and could lean on his elbow in the short, sweet grass for a day, wondering at the daisy-flower, or

could retreat at evening to his pensive citadel, there to sit dumb as a stone over his book. Yet, while counting the hides, Chaucer perhaps had caught sight, in some sly under-glance, of the shipman or the merchant who afterwards rode—and is for ever riding—Canterburywards. Spenser unquestionably gained much for his art from converse with public affairs during his brief period of active political life in Ireland. Some of that high sternness of temper which appears in his "View of the State of Ireland" was probably acquired while serving under Lord Grey, and practical duties consolidated Spenser's moral ardours, making them more than a match for any tendency within him towards imaginative voluptuousness. But Faeryland, which on one side lay so near to Elizabethan England, trended off on the other side towards cloudland, and Spenser lacked the opportunity possessed by a dramatic poet of enriching his art with the concrete knowledge of a spirit learned in human dealings. It is not too much to say that no other English poet in the same degree as Henry Taylor has possessed the skill to bend the life of action towards the life of meditation, and the craft of the man of affairs towards the poet's craft, until they meet and inosculate as organs of one living body, each aiding the other, each essential to the action of the other.

He did not possess the lyrical gift in a high degree; there are few jets and sallies in his verse. But great strength and depth of feeling were his; and if the cry of passion is not heard in his dramas as clear and high as in dramatic poetry wrought by hands less strong, this is partly because passion is seized in the grasp of reflec-

tive power and held in check until it acquires a certain maturity, breadth, and largeness with which mere intensity is hardly compatible. And his life, like his verse, was not a lyrical, a singing life; certainly there was little dithyrambic in it. None the less it was a well-ordered poem, in a full and heightened style, and rising in beauty towards its close. As there are few jets and sallies in Henry Taylor's verse, so in his life there were few pre-eminent moments—moments of sudden vision, moments of culminating ardour and force; nor can we find many strokes even of what he himself described as a surefooted impetuosity. In his conduct of life he was a prudent commander, and never uncourageous—preferring regular warfare to feats which are magnificent but are not war; never forsaking his basis of action to be sublimely audacious; but by his deliberate courage attaining success in the end—and success for him meant primarily success in the life poetic, and, as the most essential part of this, the attainment of strength of heart, and dignity and beauty of character. We read in the record of his life of no *annus mirabilis* followed by declension and collapse, but of steadfastness and progress from year to year. Sir Henry Taylor printed some ill-considered words respecting Goethe in one of the volumes of his "Autobiography"—words which may be taken to heart as a cordial and comfort by the ignorant and incapable, who are thrown off by Goethe's greatness; and yet there was something of Goethe in Sir Henry Taylor himself—something of Goethe's wisdom of life, something of Goethe's union of the public servant and the poet, something of Goethe's steadfast advance,

something, at all events, of Goethe's kindliness of temper, and of his generous recognition of other and younger men. But Goethe had an incomparable lyrical genius, a spirit of adventure, and many eminent moments of life, in which as much was accomplished as years. We are told of one such brief and extraordinary period in Henry Taylor's life, and it was, doubtless, a surprise to some of his readers to find that, with one who drew his materials, if not his inspiration, so largely from the life of man with man, this most vital period should have been one of utter solitude—nay, that its very virtue should have been the enthusiasm of solitude. But the surprise is groundless; for though a close observer of the life of action, and keenly alive to the minuter phenomena of social intercourse, Henry Taylor could not transfer his gains from life to art without a retreat upon himself. To brood and meditate was no less essential than to observe.*

Though at times intoxicated by solitude, Henry Taylor had little of the Wordsworthian passion for nature. He sought refreshment and restoration from the beauty of the world, and had a peculiar delight in sylvan recesses, the haunts of meditation; but external nature was not for him a sybil, a maenad, a bride, or an awful mother. His wisdom and power were drawn from human life, from human life in certain concrete forms, leading up to generalisations which are *axiomata media*, of invaluable service to the dramatic poet, but hardly attaining the rank of first principles.

* I refer to a season towards the close of his twenty-second year, of which an account is given in his "Autobiography," vol. i. pp. 44-46.

> "For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink
> Deep, and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds
> To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil."

So wrote Wordsworth; and he prefixed these, among other sublime lines, to his "Excursion." Neither on the wings of the speculative intellect nor on the wings of imaginative faith was our statesman-poet borne into such regions as these. He distrusted himself when leaving the actual world of human dealings, therefore he is a philosophic poet with limitations. His province does not include an Inferno or a Paradiso; nevertheless, it is a province of liberal extent and fruitful in resources, and it is, at least, entirely free from unreality and the phantasms of pseudo-philosophy.

If a *plébiscite* were to pronounce to-day on the question, "Who is the representative poet of the Victorian period?" it is possible that the votes might go in favour of Mr Browning. Yet the fact is as certain as any fact can be—as certain as that Millais and not Watts, or Leighton, or Burne-Jones will be looked on as our representative painter—that Tennyson will remain the singer of the age. It is not the poet bringing the gift most needed by his own time who represents that time best; such a poet may be rejected by the age as an alien. It is he (to use the metaphor applied to another purpose by Mr Gladstone) who gives back to his contemporaries as a river that which he has received from them as vapour. In the earlier years of the present century Byron and Shelley had carried on the impulse of the French Revolution; and in a period of reaction —the period of the White Terror, of the Holy Alliance,

of Eldon, and Castlereagh, and Sidmouth—they had advanced the claims of nations and individuals to freedom :—

> "Yet, Freedom ! yet thy banner, torn, but flying,
> Streams like the thunder-storm against the wind."

The principle of order had found a noble exponent in Wordsworth. When the struggle for parliamentary reform was ended in 1832, it seemed as if for our own country the principles of freedom and of order were reconciled and might march onward with hand clasped in hand; and because freedom and order were at length conjoined in amity, a steadfast progress of society was assured. Science was daily achieving conquests for humanity; commerce was wresting new realms from barbarism; and should not Poetry gaze into the future, the light of hope within her eyes? It is the conception of a majestic order at one with freedom, and of human progress as resulting from these, which inspires the earlier poetry of Tennyson. King Arthur may fall in battle and disappear from men's sight; the whole Round Table may be dissolved. Shall we therefore despair or lament with intemperate grief? No: "the old order changeth, giving place to new." Is the heart sore with some individual loss or grief? Let us not look back. The distance beacons, and not in vain.

> "Forward, forward, let us range,
> Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change."

Only let the men of England see to it that this movement of advance, as far as they are concerned, be

untroubled by violence and "school-boy heat" and "blind hysterics;" rather let it be such ordered progress as befits—

> "A land of settled government,
> A land of old and just renown,
> Where freedom slowly broadens down
> From precedent to precedent."

For order and freedom must henceforth be inseparably united.

The poet's sympathy with science is ardent in an age when science "reaches forth her arms to feel from world to world;" and yet once or twice his spirit is vexed by doubts as to the possibility of reconciling scientific observations with his spiritual faiths and hopes. Happily as yet science had not grown the seemingly remorseless antagonist of faith, undermining by her reasonings the very conscience and the religious sentiment; therefore it suffices that the heart, in Tennyson's poem, should stand up as the champion of the soul:—

> "A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'"

Largely viewed, science cannot but minister to human welfare if only its freedom be in harmony with spiritual order:—

> "Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell."

The "crowning race," as conceived by Tennyson, is one that shall look, eye to eye, on knowledge; holding the earth under command, reading nature like an open book;

possessing majestic order in a system of vast federations which shall bind nation to nation in peace, and having a reverent faith in—

> "One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves."

Tennyson's feelings kept pace with those of his generation; and in 1855, after the days of the Chartist upheaval, after Carlyle's vehement indictment of the *status quo*, and those meagre results which followed the generous efforts of Christian Socialists to serve the suffering poor, his tone grows troubled. Assigning in "Maud" the exaggerated denunciation of social wrongs to a speaker of morbid temperament, Tennyson expressed through the hero of his monodrama fears and doubts which assailed his own heart and the hearts of many thoughtful men. He, who had dreamed of peace and a federation of races, finds in the battle ardours of a righteous war deliverance from the selfishness and supineness of spirit which had made social life no better than an internecine strife during days that were styled days of peace.

In 1886 the tone grows yet more troubled. Again the dramatic device is adopted, and it would be unjust to regard every utterance of the speaker in the second "Locksley Hall" as expressing a conviction of the writer. But the volume which contains this poem, and presents in the character of Philip Edgar an example of the havoc wrought in young spirits by egoism finding its warrant in a philosophy falsely so called, cannot be viewed as other than an indictment of the times. And assuredly

the poet's apprehension that in our own days the course of time may have swerved, "crooked and turned upon itself" in a "backward-streaming curve," is an apprehension shared by many thoughtful minds. The writer of the second "Locksley Hall" has again given back as a river that which he received from men about him as a vapour—the fears of faith in presence of a godless science, the social fears in presence of a revolution inspired by selfish greeds, the fears of art in presence of a base naturalism which only recognises the beast in man.

But we have as yet noted only one-half of Tennyson's gift to his time. A distinguished living critic has spoken of the renascence of the spirit of wonder and romance in poetry and art, which began in the last century with "Ossian" and Chatterton and Percy's "Reliques," as one of the most important events in the history of English poetry since the days of Addison and Pope. To that renascence of wonder the poetry of Tennyson has contributed in no slight degree. While we read his verse we are now in the heart of our nineteenth century, aware of all the hopes and fears and doubts of this our day, and now we are alone in some world of old romance, or gaze forth from some—

> "Magic casement, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

"The Lady of Shalott," "Sir Galahad," "St Agnes," "Oriana," "The Sleeping Beauty," "Morte d' Arthur," are poems belonging to that movement in literature and art which Mr Theodore Watts has described as the

Renascence of Wonder. The sense of romantic aloofness from our present place and time is perhaps enhanced by the fact that in Tennyson's poetry we never become naturalised citizens of that far country, but pass in and out of the region of romance, never dwelling in it so long or so exclusively as to receive its marvels with the welcome of familiarity or that tranquil expectation with which one looks for the next apparition of wonder in a dream.

To have felt the growing difficulties of faith, and the increasing intellectual anarchy in the years between 1832 and 1851, one must have been born some years later than Tennyson, and have known Oxford in those days when, as Mr Froude writes, the creeds or no creeds were whirling young spirits about like leaves in an autumn storm. It is this whirl which we feel in the poetry of Clough, and yet amid the whirl we become aware of the steadfastness of a nature, sorely perplexed indeed, and driven hither and thither, yet of unwavering moral integrity. No doctrine offered for his acceptance seemed to give him a complete account of the facts of life; the dogmas of theology were the translations into the language of the intellect of religious instincts and aspirations, the reality of which he could not and would not deny; yet the ascertained truths of science seemed to render the acceptance of theological dogma impossible. Perhaps a future reconciliation of these conflicting aspects of truth might be hoped for; meanwhile it was the duty of a man who would not practise a fraud on his own intellect to hold himself unattached to positive creeds, whether theological or scientific; it was a duty to wait

for further light. Let us, said Clough, attend the clouded hill, and expect the voice of him who entered into the cloud. Perhaps he will descend the mount with sacred light shining from his countenance, bearing the tables of the new law; meanwhile, let us not turn back to Egypt, nor dance at the bidding of the priest around a Golden Calf. This mood of waiting for further light, this attitude of expectant attention, would become with many natures a source of moral weakness, and might give a dangerous vantage-ground to temptations of egoism and faithless self-indulgence. Clough maintained his attitude strenuously and with a certain self-denial under the strictest sense of duty. He demonstrated that such an attitude of expectant attention is inconsistent neither with a wholesome practical activity nor with a profoundly religious spirit. There is a sanative virtue in his writings which proceeds from moral steadfastness, and a virile temper that refuses mere spiritual comfort and luxury, a pillow of faith for the weary head, an opiate of pious sentiment to lull and cloud the brain.

Clough's college friend, who has lamented his loss in the pastoral elegy of "Thyrsis," suffered more deeply than Clough from *la maladie du siècle*. Mr Matthew Arnold's poetry in great part is an exquisitely delicate and lucid record of the trials of a spirit divided against itself. Clough's nature, however it may appear otherwise to superficial observers, was not a divided nature; it was whole and sound, although perplexed by irreconcilable aspects of truth. His will was not diseased; it was prompt to act upon any authoritative summons of duty,

should such summons make itself audible. Mr Arnold's gifts as a poet were incomparably rarer and finer, but it was more difficult for him to live steadfastly his true life, the life poetic, since in him the will itself has been attacked by the malady of the age. His various sympathies perplex and entangle him (I speak of the poet of past days, not of the prose-writer of the present); he yields on this side and recovers himself, yields on that side and recovers himself, and loses by each yielding some of the strength of his soul. He would fain simplify his life by submitting to one dominant set of motives, but he cannot. He admires the trenchant force of will of a hardy nature, but he does not see how this can be conjoined with what is dearer to him—gentleness, tenderness, love. He longs for the release from isolation and self-consciousness which passion and true fellowship with another human spirit bring, but he cannot quite attain this, and relapses, confessing that love is subject to change, and that each of us must dwell alone. He is swayed by emotions too powerful for him, and to Mr Arnold, as revealed in his poems, deep feeling, instead of bringing a rapturous calm or a resolved energy of will, brings restlessness and fever. He would fain possess his soul, and would be willing to embrace a cold and barren quietism, for sake of the calm that accompanies it; but knowledge, and beauty, and culture solicit him with promises too delightful to be disregarded. To know that there are things higher, nobler, more enduring than himself fortified the soul of Clough, and delivered it from egoistic solicitude. To Mr Arnold the contrast between the feverish

life and barren toil of man and the serene beauty and large sure operancy of nature becomes at times a reproach and almost a despair. A wholesome physical enjoyment of open air and the good things of sky, mountain, and stream, with quickened pulsation of the blood and a heightened sense of living, is characteristic of Clough's relations with external nature. Mr Arnold feels with infinitely greater delicacy, but with less sanity. He turns to Nature for deliverance from the excitement of his own restless feelings, and he sinks into her calms and mild depths, and is for a little time at rest; then a touch, a thought, a nameless nothing, and the trouble of heart and brain begins anew. The dreaming garden trees, the full moon, and the white evening star, the dewy dark obscurity down at the far horizon's rim, the untroubled and unpassionate spaces of the sky, the soft sea breaking at his feet, the lovely mountain line, the gracious solitude of the hills at dawn, the dimness of the Alpine pine-wood, all in nature that consoles and soothes rather than what summons or impels, is that to which Mr Arnold loves to abandon sense and spirit. Having gained a brief season of refreshment, he again takes up uneasily his burden of a feverish heart and divided will, and endeavours to pursue his way with Stoical calm, or at the lowest, with a pathetic resignation. It is no common spirit which can thus feel and delicately mirror for us the malady of the century. Could he but lose sight of the ideal, his sufferings were at an end. But it is a virtue of Mr Arnold's poetry that the flying perfect is never out of view; he falters in the pursuit, but the pursuit is never wholly abandoned.

What is here said has reference to Mr Arnold as he stands confessed to us in his earlier volumes of verse. In his prose writings there was discernible an intellectual *hauteur* which contrasted with the uneasiness and moral incertitude of his versified moods, and which implied that a dogmatist stood erect under the shifting sensitiveness of the poet. A dogmatist—for Mr Arnold is not merely a critic who interprets the minds of other men through his sensitiveness and his sympathies; he delivers with authority the conclusions of his intellect; he formulates ideas. A thoughtful observer might have predicted long since that the poet, the shy, refined, elder brother in Mr Arnold's twofold nature—would have withdrawn, saddened and unnerved, while the stirring, effective, and happier younger brother, the critic, came forward and played a brilliant part in the world. But these elder brothers are dear to us by virtue of the very qualities that lead them to the shade. We are grateful for all the quickening ideas, all the happy phrases, with which the younger brother has provoked the slow-moving mind of our country: "sweetness and light," "Hebraism," "Hellenism," "the barbarian," "the note of provinciality," "sweet reasonableness," "a magnified non-natural man;" we rejoice that each barb of thought has pierced and rankled. Yet our heart reverts fondly to the elder brother, the vanished poet. Escaping from his languors and fevers and sick fatigues, did he join himself to some tribe of roving gipsies? Shall we catch sight of him above Godstow Bridge at noon some day in haytime, or at early morning, or when the stars come out, wandering in some solitude of the

Cumner hills? or under the moon espy the form of the fugitive singer punting across the Thames at Bablockhithe;

> "And leaning backward in a pensive dream
> And fostering in his lap a heap of flowers,
> Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
> And his eyes resting on the moonlit stream."

If Mr Arnold is the poet of our times who as poet could least resist *la maladie du siècle* in its subtler forms, he whose energy of heart and soul most absolutely rejects and repels its influence is Mr Browning. To him this world appears to be a palæstra in which we are trained and tested for other lives to come; it is a gymnasium for athletes. Action, passion, knowledge, beauty, science, art—these are names of some of the means and instruments of our training and education. The vice of vices, according to his ethical creed, is languor of heart, lethargy or faintness of spirit, with the dimness of vision and feebleness of hand attending such moral enervation. Which of us does not suffer now and again from a touch of spiritual paralysis? Mr Browning's poetry, to describe it in a word, is a galvanic battery for the use of spiritual paralytics. At first the shock and the tingling frightened patients away; now they crowd to the physician and celebrate the cure. Which of us does not need at times that virtue should pass into him from a stronger human soul? To touch the singing robes of the author of "Rabbi Ben Ezra" and "Prospice" and "The Grammarian's Funeral," is to feel an influx of new strength. We gain from Mr Browning, each in his degree, some of that moral ardour and spiritual

faith and vigour of human sympathy which make interesting to him all the commonplace, confused, and ugly portions of life, those portions of life which, grating too harshly on Mr Matthew Arnold's sensitiveness, disturb his self-possession and trouble his lucidity, causing him often, in his verse, to turn away from this vulgar, distracting world to quietism and solitude, or a refined self-culture that lacks the most masculine qualities of discipline. To preserve those spiritual truths which are most precious to him, Mr Browning does not retreat, like the singer of "In Memoriam," into the citadel of the heart; rather, an armed combatant, he makes a sortie into the world of worldlings and unbelievers, and from among errors and falsehoods and basenesses and crimes, he captures new truths for the soul. It is not in calm meditation or a mystical quiet that the clearest perception of divine things comes to him; it is rather through the struggle of the will, through the strife of passion, and as much through foiled desire and defeated endeavour as through attainment and success. For asceticism, in the sense of that word which signifies a maiming and marring of our complete humanity, Mr Browning's doctrine of life leaves no place; but if asceticism mean heroic exercise, the *askesis* of the athlete, the whole of human existence, as he conceives, is designed as a school of strenuous and joyous asceticism. "Our human impulses towards knowledge, towards beauty, towards love," it has been well said, "are reverenced by him as the signs and tokens of a world not included in that which meets the senses." Therefore, he must needs welcome the whole fulness of

earthly beauty, as in itself good, but chiefly precious because it is a pledge and promise of beauty not partial and earthly, but in its heavenly plenitude. And how dare he seek to narrow or enfeeble the affections, when in all their errors and their never-satisfied aspirations, he discovers evidence of an infinite love, from which they proceed and towards which they tend? Nor would he stifle any high ambition, for it is a wing to the spirit lifting man towards heights of knowledge or passion or power which rise unseen beyond the things of sense, heights on which man hereafter may attain the true fulfilment of his destiny.

If we were to try to express in one word the special virtue of the work of the ardent poetess who stood and sang by Mr Browning's side, that word could be no other than *love*. It was her part to show how the ideality of poetry does not lead the singer away from humanity, but rather bids him enter into the inmost chambers of love and tender desire. The poems of Mrs Browning which we remember with gratitude are not those that were derived from her learned studies, nor those which show her ineffectually straining after a vague sublimity of thought, but those that come to us straight from "the red-ripe of the heart." "The Cry of the Children," "Cowper's Grave," "Little Mattie," and others akin to these are dearer to us than any songs of any seraphim or rhapsodies of life's progress. And what is "Casa Guidi Windows" but a woman's love-making with a nation? And what is "Aurora Leigh" but a romance with a purpose, the purpose being to show that what is most precious in art on the one hand, and on the other

what is most precious in modern schemes for the regeneration or amelioration of society, must perish unless both art and social polity be based on the life of the affections—the common heart of man and woman? With some of the philosophising of the poem we can well dispense, and we would give it all for the picture of Marian Erle's boy, "the yearling creature, warm and moist with life to the bottom of his dimples," as he lies upon the bed:—

> "The pretty baby-mouth
> Shut close as if for dreaming that it sucked,
> The little naked feet, drawn up the way
> Of nested birdlings; everything so soft
> And tender,—to the tiny holdfast hands,
> Which closing on a finger into sleep,
> Had kept the mould of 't."

The violin's fulness and the violin's intensity are in the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," and fewer notes here than elsewhere are faultily touched, for the music here has no other meaning to express than that of perfect love.

But how shall the heart bear itself in presence of the conclusions of modern science, which seem to desolate it and rob it of its most cherished hopes? What new heroism of the heart is possible in these our days, by which it may confront the truth, and still live nobly, even if sadly? It was a woman who attempted to resolve these questions for herself and us by the aid of imaginative genius. With her active truthfulness of intellect and her passionate desire to make her life square with facts, George Eliot sought for knowledge from every side, endeavouring to appropriate and assimilate it for

the highest uses. But conscience, the moral element, was supreme in her nature, and drew all things towards itself. And second only to conscience stood those deep and tender affections which bound her to her fellows. The scientific acquisitions and ideas of our time, therefore, interested her profoundly, and she instantly turned over these acquisitions and ideas to study their ethical side and their bearings on the affections; to ascertain how they stand related, first to character and conduct, and secondly to love and joy. The result at which George Eliot arrives is fortifying, not gladdening. Joy, she tells us, is not possible—at least in this present time—to one who would seek it as a personal possession; or, if possible, it is so only through some inadequacy of nature, some narrowness or shallowness of heart, which renders it inaccessible to the great sorrow of the world. The higher nature must accept the higher rule; only by self-renouncement can such an one attain that heroic strength or that grave and sweet composure which must stand in the place of joy. The motive of this self-renouncement can henceforth be no hope of any "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" from any supernatural lord or master, but only the desire to serve the actual men and women who surround us, and those who shall follow us and them upon this earth. George Eliot could not be content to shape her character and conduct by mere guess, conjecture, or probability. The hesitancy of endless questioning and re-questioning was intolerable to her; she loved to bring intellectual and moral conflict to an issue, so that division of nature might cease, and victory, even though a stern and sorrowful victory, might declare itself on this side or on that.

Our general conception of George Eliot's character formed from her novels was not altered in any essential by the new light thrown upon it by her letters and journals. We had known that she was organised so as to possess the most trembling sensibility to physical sources of pleasure and pain; and in her personal confessions she appears with nerves servile to every skiey influence, saddened in a rare degree by cloud or rain, quickened and invigorated in a rare degree by sunshine, fine airs, and the breathing quiet of the country. The ground-tone of her spirit was not bright, and the autumn harmonised with her mood better than the spring. There is a lucid breadth, spiritual and touched by sadness, in a clear September day, which, to some tempers, more than compensates for the songs and blossoms of the spring-tide. The edge of autumn on the morning air would make even London a place of delight to George Eliot. She loved the sunset better than the dawn—a wide sunset seen over heath and moor, or spaces of the sea, and she would dream, like a child, of endless progress through the luminous vistas of the west into an unknown land, or would throw her spirit abroad on the receding flood of light and beauty, as on a wave of choral music, and, losing the sense of separate existence, would "feel melted into the general life." Autumn and sunset have in them some of that "finest memory" in which George Eliot found the substance of our "finest hope." Among perfumes she cared more for the delicate scent of dried rose-leaves—an emblem, as it were, of the piety of remembered happiness—than for the rich gusts from a garden in June. With such an exquisite

sensibility, George Eliot was known to us as possessing a rare capacity for intense delights and prolonged and refined pain; and in her letters she is revealed, ever and anon borne away by raptures of pleasure—a passionate lover of great music ("music," she writes, "arches over this existence with another and a diviner"), a delighted student of painting and sculpture, or unable to restrain tears of joy on meeting what is noblest in poetry. But, although a happy sharer in beautiful mirth, and herself a creator of wise and genial laughter, her disposition was not spontaneously buoyant or joyous. From childhood she owned that "liability to have all her soul become a quivering fear" which belongs to imaginative and sympathetic natures; her eye was even morbidly on the watch in cloudless hours for the "crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air." As a girl she suffered much from her own sensitiveness and passionate shyness; in later years she often found cause to object strongly to herself as "a bundle of unpleasant sensations, with a palpitating heart and awkward manners." She often held on her way through a valley of shadow haunted by cruel whisperings, or struggled forward through some desperate slough of despond. "My life for the last year," wrote George Eliot, when "Middlemarch" was brought to an end, "has been a sort of nightmare, in which I have been scrambling on the slippery bank of a pool, just keeping my head above water." When her troubles were real and definite, she would face them courageously, and would turn away from false or illusive consolation. What she said to a friend with respect to endurance in trials of faith or

scepticism, she applied to the lesser sorrows of life—"the highest calling and election is to do without opium, and live through all our pain with conscious, clear-eyed endurance."

Her intensest pains and keenest joys were those of the affections. It was not only while she dwelt at Griff, "the warm little nest where her affections were fledged," that there lived the clinging child in her heart; all through life the most marked trait of her character, as Mr Cross truly says, was "the absolute need of some one person who should be all in all to her." In girlhood she took refuge for a time in severe religious asceticism, because she could not be moderate in human loves, and felt that total abstinence was possible, although temperance was not. No child ever cared more to be cherished and petted, to hear kind words, to receive a motherly kiss, than George Eliot did as a grown-up woman. Her bump of adhesiveness, declared the phrenologists, was large; and in the three volumes of her "Life" there is a wealth of the love of faithful friendship given and gladly received. Nor did she practise or approve a stoical repression of the utterance of affection. "I like not only to be loved," she wrote to Mrs Burne-Jones, "but also to be told that I am loved. . . . The realm of silence is large enough beyond the grave. This is the world of light and speech, and I shall take leave to tell you that you are very dear." But there is always, as here, a touch of dignity in the expression of her love, no superlatives raised to the nth power, no "little language," like that which is the foil of Swift's inhumanity. Each MS. of

her novels is inscribed to George Henry Lewes in words which make an outlet for the current of her affection so broad and deep that the stream flows with no uproarious hurry, but a grave, sweet majesty. The MS. of "Romola" bears the inscription—"To the husband whose perfect love has been the best source of her insight and strength, this MS. is given by his devoted wife, the writer;" and that of "Middlemarch"—"To my dear husband, George Henry Lewes, in this nineteenth year of our blessed union." In her elder days George Eliot's loving kindness was given with peculiar sweetness and grace to the young who were illuminated by the brightness of some new joy or who felt for the first time the keen edge of pain. "It is one of the gains of advancing age," she writes, "that the good of young creatures becomes a more definite intense joy to us." Her feeling was that pathetic one—purified from all egoistic pleasure—with which Shakspere in the plays of his latest years bows tenderly over his Perdita and Miranda, his Ferdinand and Florizel.

This tender devotion to individuals and sympathy with personal joys and sorrows were united in George Eliot with a capacity for enthusiasm about great causes in which the general interests of a people or of humanity itself are at stake. Without such sense of a great common existence how could she have been quite ardent and quite true in singing her own part in "the great Handel chorus" of life? And when she felt that enthusiasm was not a blind warmth—heat without light—it was her happiness to abandon herself to the wave of emotion with no reservations or safeguards of a

petty prudence. "I love the souls," she writes, "that rush to their goal with a full stream of sentiment—that have too much of the positive to be harassed by the perpetual negatives, which, after all, are but the disease of the soul, to be expelled by fortifying the principle of vitality." And on the occasion of that shining apparition, the French Revolution of 1848, she wrote to Mr John Sibree:

"You and Carlyle are the only two people who feel just as I would have them—who can glory in what is actually great and beautiful without putting forth any cold reservations and incredulities to save their credit for wisdom. . . . I feared that you lacked revolutionary ardour. But no—you are just as *sans-culottish* and rash as I would have you. You are not one of those sages whose reason keeps so tight a rein on their emotions that they are too constantly occupied in calculating consequences to rejoice in any great manifestation of the forces which underlie our everyday existence."

Add to this power of enthusiasm for large causes, a rare conscientiousness about duties that to some appear small, and we perceive how complete was George Eliot's nature on the moral side. "'That conscience goes to the hammering in of nails,'" she writes, "is my gospel." This sense of the duty of thoroughness in detail was in part inherited from her father. It afflicted her seriously that, by a misprint, in the cheap edition, Adam Bede should be made to say "speerit," whereas the dialect required that he should say "sperrit"; and that she should have written "Zincálo" in the "Spanish Gypsy" instead of "Zíncalo" was a misadventure which involved the careful recasting of several passages for a new edition.

This passion for definiteness and accuracy was a central characteristic of her intellect. It helped to de-

termine her creed on the negative side, while her ardent sympathies went to work on the positive or constructive side to educe the richest meanings and the most vitalising force from that Human Catholicism which was her religion. But although she chose to build her temple of stone upon the solid earth, and feared that if she aspired to build in the heavens the shrine and temple-roof might be of cloud, George Eliot had no tendency to deliver her mind in the form of hard and definite opinions. She felt that the facts and the emotions which should suit the facts are generally larger than can be fitted to a precise formula of words, and she justly feared that such a formula might be a ligature apt to cause the growing soul to dwindle. "I shrink," she wrote to Mr Frederic Harrison, "from decided 'deliverances' on momentous subjects from the dread of coming to swear by my own 'deliverances,' and sinking into an insistent echo of myself. That is a horrible destiny—and one cannot help seeing that many of the most powerful men fall into it." George Eliot was saved from a hard intellectuality, both by the enthusiasm of her affections, and by the presence of large emotions which were winged by imagination. When asked whether in her opinion Goethe had a strain of mysticism in his soul, she answered Yes—"of so much mysticism as I think inevitably belongs to a full poetic nature—I mean the delighted bathing of the soul in emotions which overpass the outlines of definite thought." But again her sympathies and her intellect protected her against the waste of spirit in a vague and luxurious mysticism, which, as if to justify a dangerous form of

self-indulgence, sometimes assumes high philosophic names. "I thought of you last night," she wrote to Miss Hennell,

> "when I was in a state of mingled rapture and torture—rapture at the sight of a glorious evening sky, torture at the sight and hearing of the belabouring given to the poor donkey which was drawing me from Ramsgate home."

Always in George Eliot's passage through life she returned from the mystic sunset splendours to the poor belaboured donkey; but lest the burden of afflicted and long-suffering donkeyhood should drive her mad, there was the far-off sunset in which to bathe and refresh her spirit.

The influence—one might perhaps say the tyranny—of scientific ideas apparent in George Eliot's artistic work becomes even more strikingly apparent if we place it side by side with the work of Charlotte Brontë, in which the heart and conscience of a woman of genius, who wrote direct from her own heart and brain, are so vividly presented. The moral import of Charlotte Brontë's work, I have elsewhere written,* was that the mutual passionate love of one man and one woman is sacred, and creates a centre of highest life, energy, and joy in the world—the world from whose favour, indifference, or antagonism, those secluded and isolated by love are now for ever free. The relations of man and woman as thus conceived are of the purest personal kind. The moral import of George Eliot's work is that all individual personal relations grow out of and belong to large impersonal social forces, and that in all joy of individual

* In a review of Mr Swinburne's "A Note on Charlotte Brontë," *The Academy*, September 8, 1877.

passion there lurks the danger of an egoism blind and cruel. And while Charlotte Brontë, who would glorify passion, delighted in the gradual approach, through external obstacles, of two persons framed each for the bliss and perfecting of the other, George Eliot, who is interested in the tests which sacrifice, self-surrender, duty, apply to the heart, delights in bringing into relation two persons who are spiritually unlike and unequal, of whom one must be the giver the other the receiver, or even the one a redeemer and the other a destroyer. Two human creatures framed for love and joy, starved for lack of both, and then warmed and fed each by the other until life becomes ecstasy—this is what Charlotte Brontë so vividly imagined. George Eliot studies the tragic parting between a full and joyous nature and all its joy, save only the stern joy of dutiful renouncement. The imperious, energetic, passionate, thwarted man, who, a fear and fascination to all others, is drawn on from indifference to a soul-devouring hunger and thirst for one woman (a woman with attraction playing through a resisting medium), drawn on to the extreme of desire and need, and enveloping her whom he loves in an atmosphere charged with the electric force of his desire—such is Charlotte Brontë's one conception of man, her one conception of love; and it has surely occurred to many readers that such a conception, original and striking though it be, is peculiarly a woman's conception, and that Rochester and Paul Emanuel are admirable quite as much because they are feminine ideals as because they are veritable human beings; or rather a little more admirable and interesting from the former

point of view than from the latter. Out of the oceanic amplitude and variety of human life what has Charlotte Brontë seen and depicted? One thing with incomparable force, altogether excellently. And for certain aspects of external nature she possessed a true and passionate perception. It wrongs her genius to speak of it as other than powerful through its intensity, and intense partly through its limitation.

If we were to seek for the purest expression in lyrical poetry of the same lofty ethics of self-renouncement which George Eliot has embodied in prose fiction, we should find it in a poem by a writer whose genius and moral temper are wholly unlike the genius and moral temper of George Eliot—in Mr Swinburne's stanzas of high intention, entitled "The Pilgrims." Singing "sadly at once and gladly," the pilgrims pass by, and are questioned as they pass: Who is their lady of love? Is she a queen, having great gifts to give? Do they not repent the devotion of their lives to one who is seen only by faith—the crowned humanity of some future age—while the sign and sentence of mortal sorrow is written on their brows? What shall be their reward? Even their fellows, for whose sake they have renounced joy and peace and rest, will forget them:—

> "And these men shall forget you. Yea, but we
> Shall be a part of the earth and the ancient sea,
> And heaven-high air august, and awful fire,
> And all things good; and no man's heart shall beat
> But somewhat in it of our blood once shed
> Shall quiver and quicken, as now in us the dead
> Blood of men slain, and the old same life's desire
> Plants in their fiery footsteps our fresh feet."

Impatient of the narrow range of human passions

which our modern idyllic poetry expresses, and of the limitation of its feeling for the glories and terrors of the forces of external nature, Mr Swinburne took at first perhaps an ill way of effecting a legitimate purpose. Having exhibited the beast in humanity, its orgasms of pleasure and of torment, the man-leopard, the woman-serpent, he looked upward and discovered the god in humanity, the redeeming ardour of the patriot-martyr, the divine self-sacrifice of perfect love in womanhood. Over against the figure of Mary Stuart, wrecker and ruiner of hearts, stands the figure of the girl-redeemer, Chthonia, so spotless in flesh, so strong in spirit. With his lyrical temperament Mr Swinburne sings both the shame and the splendour of our manhood in their extremes, and in considering the ethical tendency of his work no one portion of it must be viewed in isolation from the rest. But to judge of any artistic work merely by its ethical tendency is to judge unjustly, and the injustice is extreme in the case of Mr Swinburne. He has widened the bounds of song; he has created a new music in English verse; he has enlarged the instrument of expression. The sun, and the wind, and the sea, have spoken to us through his verse. Mr Swinburne's poetry liberates and dilates the imagination in its dealings with external nature; and in the mythology of his imagination the powers of nature are nobly conceived in their strangeness and their beauty, as part monster, part human, part divine. A thinker, in the strict sense of the word, Mr Swinburne is not, except on topics connected with art and literature. He has caught up with lyrical enthusiasm those ideas of the present time that

make the loudest promises on behalf of freedom, and he has animated them with his own ardour and coloured them with the hues of his imagination. If he utters not a little of what Mr Maurice, speaking of Carlyle, termed "wild Pantheistic rant," it is right to remember that Mr Swinburne pays special homage to the moral powers of the universal soul of which he sings, and that he recognises its highest manifestation in the acts of highest human virtue. As to a future life for the individual soul, he will neither affirm nor deny.

"Shadows, would we question darkness? Ere our eyes and brows be fanned
Round with airs of twilight, washed with dews from sleep's eternal stream,
Would we know sleep's guarded secret? Ere the fire consume the brand
Would we know if yet its ashes may requicken?"

Yet were the life of a man no more than the flash of a foambow on the advancing wave, it were worth living for the sake of its brightness, its beauty, its leap towards heaven and free air.

"All a-flower and all a-fire and all flung heavenward, who shall say
Such a flash of life were worthless? This is worth a world of care—
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing flames of spray."

Many critics have commented on the sensual fervours of Mr Swinburne's earlier poems; it remains for some critic to bring to clearer view the spirituality of his later songs, and to demonstrate that the poet of freedom is indeed at heart a poet of order.

Mr Swinburne indulges in a contemptuous reference

to the cheap science of George Eliot. Her effort to adjust deliberately and carefully her feelings to ascertained truths, is a process which one of Mr Swinburne's lyrical temper cannot perhaps even conceive aright. "Superstitious in grain, and anti-scientific to the marrow" are the terms in which his brother characterises Dante Gabriel Rossetti. And not only was the science of our modern days alien to Rossetti's genius; he was equally out of sympathy with the industrial movement and the mechanical progress of our time. It was the peculiar character of his imagination which held him aloof, rather than any doctrinaire views or ethical theories. Mr Theodore Watts, who describes the movement in poetry and art which commenced in the eighteenth century with the ballad revival, the poems of Chatterton and Macpherson's "Ossian," as the Renascence of Wonder, justly assigns a chief place to Dante Rossetti in the later history of this movement. Secluded from the stir and turmoil of the market and the street, unvexed by the clang of hammer and the din of machinery, caring not a jot for origin of species, descent of man, evolution, heredity, struggle for existence, and such-like terrors of the new law, he lived in a haunted land of beauty and of subtle passion.

> "There the elf-girls flood with wings
> Valleys full of plaintive air;
> There breathe perfumes; there in rings
> Whirl the foam-bewildered springs;
> Siren there
> Winds her dizzy hair and sings."

It was just a year before the Hyde Park Exhibition displayed to all nations its nineteenth-century wonders

of glass and iron, that the short-lived periodical *The Germ*—in which appeared Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel," and his allegoric narrative "Hand and Soul"—ran its course. The naughty world would not buy *The Germ*, and mocked at the art of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood; yet as years went on a kind of occult fame gathered about the name of the great painter and poet. Not a little of the special attraction of his work for the present time lies in its remoteness from all those contemporary influences which make up a great part of the environment of each of us. We enter the dreamer's magic shallop with its prow of carven moonstone and are wafted to the strand of an enchanted island; all around us is exact and definite as if we saw it with a painter's eye, yet all is steeped in magic and mystery. Is it a world of sense or of spirit? Of neither alone, but of that "spirit in sense" which the early poets of Italy, and chief among them Dante, revealed in their verse. A higher gift is bestowed by the poet who discovers to us the actual world in new and deeper meanings, radiant, wonderful, apparelled in the glory and the freshness of a dream than can be given by him who leads us into a shadowy world of old romance and mystical passion. This higher Renascence of Wonder was the gift of Wordsworth's noblest poetry. But the Renascence of Wonder through romance is precious also, widening as it does in its own peculiar way the realm of the spirit; and in rendering such service to the imagination "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan" can hardly take a higher place than Rossetti's ballads of "The King's Tragedy" and "Sister Helen."

Rossetti has been spoken of as an "art poet" (as if all poetry were not art) in opposition to the spontaneous poet—the poet of Nature. The truth which missed its expression here is that, with Rossetti, the raw material of emotion, the joy or pain in its native state, must go through many processes before it is transmuted and transfigured from life into art. With such a poet as Burns, in his purely lyrical pieces, the transmutation is indeed absolute; but it is effected by a single, simple process. He is stung by pleasure or by pain, and his song is only the immortal heart of an actual cry. With Rossetti also life is the source of song; but the passage from one to the other may be by occult or seemingly devious ways. The seed of passion drops into the soil, sheds its husk of circumstance, puts up a slender shoot, takes the sunshine and the dew, and after a season bears a flower. But even this flower is not the last result; there is a spirit of the flower, such as Blake saw springing, with ecstasy, from the calyx, and represented in some of his designs. Actual joy and actual pain finally take form with Rossetti in a new mythology of the imagination—a mythology not cold and incredible, but instinct with the essence of passion, and fostered into full-grown life by the spirit of beauty; a mythology the peculiar character of which has been determined partly by his own creative instincts, and partly by his nurture among the pre-Renaissance poets and painters of Italy. His poems are very far from being transcripts of actual experience; and yet they are true offspring of life, "creatures of poignant thirst and exquisite hunger," no mere elaborations of the studio.

"The Song-god—He the Sun-god—is no slave
Of thine: thy Hunter he, who for thy soul
Fledges his shaft: to no august control
Of thy skilled hand his quivered store he gave:
But if thy lips' loud cry leap to his smart,
The inspir'd recoil shall reach thy brother's heart."

Admirable as are his ballads, "The House of Life," recording a personal experience transmuted by the imagination, is Rossetti's highest achievement in verse. There are two other "sonnet-sequences," and only two, in English poetry which can take rank beside it, "The Sonnets of Shakspere" and "Sonnets from the Portuguese." It is no wrong to Shakspere's genius to admit that of his sonnets not a few are overrun with the vices of style characteristic of his age; and we may with as little fear of injury acknowledge that some sonnets of Mrs Browning lack that fine artistic self-control, the highest obedience to the law of beauty, which should be as stringent as the self-control of asceticism, and is so much more fruitful. On the other hand, pure and exquisite as is the conception of love embodied in Rossetti's sonnets, there is another way of love, a higher way, which some poet of hardier temper, who grasps more largely the facts of life, may yet interpret for us. Not beauty alone, and sweetness and grace and gentle companionship and tender fidelity, will enter into that ideal. Courage and comradeship, all that is most common and, therefore, most precious, seams and scars, the tokens of stress and strain, strife and endurance, must present themselves as readily as gold hair and the liquid eyes of youth. To breast the gale, to ride into the blast, must be discovered to be as blissful and secure as any leafy

recess amid the soft *roucoulements* of the grove. Rossetti's haunt of love is a garden enclosed like that of mediæval poets, until it is entered and laid waste by the dread powers of doom. But to compensate —great abstractions from life made living presences by the poet's myth-making imagination hover always at hand to give largeness and space to these poems.

Rossetti escaped from reality to romance, yet at a serious cost; and the life which should have been so full and joyous to the end was saddened and turned awry. He escaped through his imagination from a world of turmoil and dust, of strife and greed, of commerce and manufacture, of vulgar art and conquering science; he escaped, for there was little in him of the passion of the reformer to overcome his repugnance, and bid him stand fast and do battle with the world. Mr William Morris, as seen in his earliest volume of poems—a volume full of beauty and strangeness—might appear to have much in common with Rossetti. Romantic beauty and chivalrous passion and tragic-picturesque situations attract him, and where can he find these in our work-a-day world? Miles and Giles and Isabeau, Constance fille de fay, and fair Ellayne le Violet, are infinitely more pleasing company than Thomson and Johnson and Jones. The blue closet, the little tower, the ancient walled garden "in the happy poplar land," are far more delectable places for a lover of romance than the fields and streets of our nineteenth century. In the "Earthly Paradise," though he may claim to be more than the idle singer of an empty day, and to lay ghosts, in truth the author lays no ghosts that haunt the hearts and

brains of modern men. Nor is he in any but a superficial sense a disciple of Chaucer. The ride to Canterbury on breezy April mornings to the sound of jingling bells or the miller's bagpipe, under the conduct of jovial Harry Bailly, and in company with a parson who wrought and taught Christ's doctrine, and a ploughman inspired with the heärty benevolence of a Hercules, is all unlike the foiled search of an earthly paradise by weary wanderers. In that soft western land to which they have come without purpose or design, the disappointed questers, now grown old, exchange their northern stories with the old men of the city for stories of Greece. And month blooms and fades into month, and season into season, and at last death comes and makes an end alike of joy and sorrow. An unheroic melancholy, a barren autumnal sadness, broods over the whole poem. The flame of passion and endeavour rises up and sinks down again into coldness and ashes, and our eyes follow the brightness and dwell upon the gloom with a strange, enervating, æsthetic satisfaction. We come to hate death, not knowing what it means, and to love life, though of it we know even less; and the earth and heaven are but as a curtain hung around a narrow room in which play and laughter and weeping are heard; and last of all there is silence. Such poetry (and all the more because it comes from a spirit robust and vigorous in its sympathy with human passion) is in truth the poetry of despair.

But since "The Earthly Paradise" was first imagined Mr Morris has found a faith. His heartiness of nature would not permit the passion of the reformer to remain

dormant within him; his quarrel with the present time is acute; he still dreams indeed of an earthly paradise, but now he sees it afar off in the Socialist millennium. Though we get from Mr Morris no original verse comparable with that of his earlier volumes, and though we may doubt of his millennium, we cannot but rejoice that he has quitted that strange dreamy western land, and stands a singer of hope in the streets of London. At least as a protest against the greeds and cruelties and unloveliness of the present there is a worth in lines which tell his dream of the future:—

"Then all *mine* and all *thine* shall be *ours*, and no more shall any man crave
For riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave.
And what wealth then shall be left us when none shall gather gold
To buy his friend in the market, and pinch and pine the sold?
Nay, what save the lovely city, and the little house on the hill,
And the wastes and the woodland beauty, and the happy fields we till;
And the homes of ancient stories, the tombs of the mighty dead;
And the wise men seeking out marvels, and the poet's teeming head;
And the painter's hand of wonder; and the marvellous fiddle-bow,
And the banded choirs of music: all those that do and know."

Better, far better, "Chants for Socialists" with faith, however inadequate for the wants of the soul, and hope and charity, than the "Earthly Paradise" with all of life a melancholy dream.

Mr Morris's teaching, in his character of a reformer, has something in common with that of a greater reformer who during forty years has been one of the chief

influences of the age. To speak in a few words of the manifold lessons on art, and life, and national polity which Mr Ruskin has given to his countrymen may appear less becoming than to be silent; but in truth the cardinal doctrine which runs through all his teaching can be stated in a line. It is that men—men and not the works of men, men and not materials, or machines, or gold, or even pictures, or statues, or public buildings—should be the prime objects of our care, and reverence, and love. Hence it is that, as a writer on art, he necessarily becomes a moralist, since he must needs inquire from what human faculties does this work of art arise, and to what human faculties does it appeal? Hence it is that in the decline of architecture or painting he reads the degradation of national character. Hence it is that the life of the workman appears to him to be of higher importance than the quantity of work which he turns out. Hence it is that he has opposed himself to the orthodox political economy, with a sense that man, and the life and soul of man, cannot be legitimately set aside while we consider apart from these the laws of wealth or of so-called utility. No other truth can be quite so important for our own age, or for any age, as the truth preached so unceasingly and so impressively by Mr Ruskin.

I have named some of the fixed stars that shine in the firmament of our literature; but all of these have not been registered on my map; and lesser lights are left unnamed, and clusters, and galaxies, and nebulæ must remain disentangled and unresolved. I have spoken of eminent persons, because literature, as Cardi-

nal Newman has said, "is essentially a personal work." And I have spoken of these persons less as masters of technique, each in his own province, than as seekers for truth, because it seems to me a distinction of the literature of the Victorian period that it is the literature of a time of spiritual trial, difficulty, and unrest, and that its greatest representatives have been before all else seekers, in matters social, moral, and religious, for some coherent conception or doctrine of life which shall bring unity to our emotions and law and impulse to our will.

Were we to anticipate the future of literature, of what worth were a guess or a venture at unauthentic prophecy? Some shy schoolboy on whom we had not reckoned, some girl in an unknown nook of rural England, may one day upset our cunningest calculations, and our hope is that it will be so. Two great factors, however, in the future, may be reckoned on with certainty—science and democracy. Already scientific conceptions have had their influence on the creatures of imagination, while, at the same time, a great school of historical study, scientific, not in the vain pretension of possessing a complete theory of human development, but in its exact aims and patient habits, has arisen in England. Literature in the future must surely confront science in a friendly attitude, welcoming all the facts and all the new lights that science brings, while maintaining its own dignity and independence, and resisting the temptation to forsake its own methods and processes because they are other than the methods of science. All kinds of material should be welcome to the soul, if only the soul will preserve its own supremacy over the material

which it uses. Having given ourselves away [illegible] observing and co-ordinating facts, having generalised from those facts, we must then recover our personal force and reassert ourselves as being, we ourselves, the first and last of all facts. "A man must sit solidly at home," says Emerson when speaking of the true uses of history, "and not [illegible] himself to be bullied by kings or empires, but know that he is greater than all the geography and all the government of the world." No, he need not sit solidly at home; he may go forth and converse with kings and the envoys of empires, and then dismiss them haughtily and re-enter with added wisdom and power into the empire of himself. It is possible, indeed, that the old arts and the old types of beauty may be unable to survive the influences of an age of science, commerce, democracy. Well, be it so; let us bid them a cheerful farewell, and confidently expect some new and as yet inconceivable manifestations of the spirit of order and beauty which can never become extinct while man remains man. "Beauty," says Emerson again, "will not come at the call of a legislature, nor will it repeat in England or America its history in Greece. It will come, as always, unannounced, and spring up between the feet of brave and earnest men. It is in vain that we look for genius to reiterate its miracles in the old arts; it is its instinct to find beauty and holiness in new and necessary facts, in the field and roadside, in the shop and mill. Proceeding from a religious heart, it will raise to a divine use the railroad, the insurance office, the joint-stock company, our law, our primary assemblies, our commerce, the galvanic

battery, the electric jar, the prism, and the chemist's retort, in which we seek now only an economical use. Is not the selfish and even cruel aspect which belongs to our great mechanical works—to mills, railways and machinery—the effect of the mercenary impulses which these works obey? . . . When science is learned in love, and its powers are wielded by love, they will appear the supplements and continuations of the material creation."

Here we may end in a spirit of good hope. Let literature accept all modern facts, and at the same time let it assert and reinforce the soul. From the meeting of new truth and fuller and purer passion, what but some higher and unimagined forms of beauty must arise? Possibly no art of the schools, but a nobler art of life.

THE INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE.*

A DISCUSSION, in which many eminent persons took part, was held, not long since, with a view to finding an answer to the question, "What hundred books are the best?" It would have been more profitable for us had we been advised how to read any one of the hundred; for what, indeed, does it matter whether we read the best books or the worst, if we lack the power or the instinct or the skill by which to reach the heart of any one of them? Books for most readers are, as Montaigne says, "a languid pleasure;" and so they must be, unless they become living powers, with a summons or a challenge for our spirit, unless we embrace them or wrestle with them.

Now if some of those who have proved their power of getting to the heart of great books were to tell us of their craft or their art or their method, we should listen with interest and attention; and if we were to compare method with method, we could not fail to learn something worth learning. One would like to know, for example, the process by which Sainte-Beuve dealt with an author; how he made his advances; how he invested and beleagred his author; how he sapped up to him, and drew his parallels and zigzags of approach; how he stormed the

* In this article I have said nothing of the historical study of literature and its interpretation through the general movements of the life and mind of nations.

breach and made the very citadel his own. We have heard of the secret of Hegel; but it is not Hegel alone who has a secret. Every great writer has a secret of his own, and this is none the less difficult to discover because the great writer made no effort at concealment. An open secret is as securely guarded as any, like Poe's purloined letter, which was invisible because it was obviously exposed upon the mantelpiece. Every great writer has his secret, and there are some writers who seem to cherish their secret and to elude us just at the moment of capture; and these, perhaps, are the most fascinating of all, endlessly to be pursued. Who, for example, has ever really laid hold of Shakspere? He is still abroad, and laughs at our attempts to capture or surprise him. If some fine interpreter of literature would but explain to us how he lays hand on and overmasters the secret of his author, we should feel like boys receiving their lessons in woodcraft from an old hunter; and we are all hunters, skilful or skilless, in literature—hunters for our spiritual good or for our pleasure. How to stalk our stag of ten; how to get round to the windward of him; how to creep within range; how to bring him down while he glances forth with startled eye (yet does he not always elude us?); yes, and how to dismember him and cart him home (but is he not far away, filling the glades with ironical uproar?)—in all this it is that we should like to be instructed by some experienced ranger of the woods.

We speak of the interpretation of literature; and it may be asked, Is not literature itself an interpretation —interpretation of external nature and of the nature of

man? Why, then, should we speak of an interpretation of that which itself interprets, an interpretation of an interpretation? And persons who talk in this way are also likely to say that a work of literature—a poem, suppose—which does not explain itself is not worth explaining. But literature is more than an interpretation of external nature and of human life; it is a revelation of the widening possibilities of human life, of finer modes of feeling, dawning hopes, new horizons of thought, a broadening faith and unimagined ideals. Moreover, every great original writer brings into the world an absolutely new thing—his own personality, with its unique mode of envisaging life and nature; and in each of us he creates a new thing—a new nerve of feeling or a new organ of thought; a new conception of life, or a new thrill of emotion. We sometimes call him by even a higher name than revealer; we call him a maker or creator. The ideal world in which we live and move and have our being—a world in the most literal sense as real as the material universe—is indeed in great part the handiwork of man the creator. By countless generations of men this world of thoughts and hopes and fears and joys and loves has been brought into existence, and it is still in process of creation. To reveal or to create this world every great thinker, every great artist has helped in an appreciable degree. It is inhabited by noble creatures—men and women—Achilles, Odysseus, Prometheus, Oedipus, Helen, Antigone, the Socrates of Plato, the two explorers of the circles of Hell and the mount of Purgatory, Don Quixote on Rosinante, Hamlet, Imogen, Cordelia, Falstaff, Prospero—all born of the

brain of man the creator. That we should understand the facts and the laws of this ideal world is surely little less important to us than that we should measure the courses of the planets or explore the universe that lies in a drop of stagnant water.

Now, if literature be part of a gradually opening revelation or creation from man's spirit, it is easy to understand how it should need to be interpreted. It cannot be comprehended all in a moment; its widening horizons can hardly be recognised. The light of a new truth, coming suddenly upon us, blears our eyes. Seeing, we see, and do not perceive; hearing, we hear, and do not understand. A great point is gained when men acknowledge that something has indeed come before them, though what it is they cannot tell; when they see men as trees walking; when they know that a voice has spoken to them, though it be as the voice of a trumpet, the words of which they cannot understand. At first with most men the revealer can do no more than this; whatever he utters must be for them at first a dark saying or a parable. The majority of men are slow to apprehend new truths, are slow to become sensitive to new feelings. They require to have these things demonstrated and brought home to them. Or, if they try to take things up at once, they take them up, as we say, by the wrong handle, and get no good of them. But time alone is needed, with a serious effort on the part of each man to interpret things to and for himself, using in that effort whatever aid he can obtain from his fellows, who may happen to be better qualified than he to come at the meaning of the widening revelation. A

great writer never fails ultimately to become his own interpreter; only this may need much time—perhaps the lifetime of a generation of men. And thus it is quite right to say that a poem which does not explain itself is not worth explaining; only we should add that it sometimes needs twenty, thirty, forty years to explain itself to the mass of men, and that for a long period it may be able to explain itself only to a few chosen disciples.

The professional interpreters of literature, as a class, do not help us much. These are the scribes of literature, who expound the law from their pulpits in the reviews, weekly, monthly, quarterly. The word "critic" by its derivation means a judge rather than an interpreter, and the function assumed by these ministers of literature resembles that of a magistrate on the bench. Now a crew of disorderly persons, often of the frailer sex, each of whom, more perhaps through weakness than wickedness, has been guilty of bringing into the world a novel in three volumes; now a company of abashed and shivering poetlings, each charged with the crime of having uttered counterfeit verse, comes before his worship the reviewer, who lightly dismisses some with a caution, and sentences others to public laughter and the stocks during a week. And the sad thing is that though instances have been known in which a poetaster reformed and became a respectable citizen, the female novelist, having once erred, is lost to all sense of shame, and inevitably appears before the bench again and again, once at least in every six months during the period of her natural life. We need this police and

magistracy of literature, and we may cheerfully admit that, unless bribed by friendship or malice, they do in the main truly and indifferently administer justice of a rough-and-ready kind.)

But, if in the company of petty poetical offenders there happen to be one true prophet — a Shelley, a Wordsworth, a Keats—the chances are that his worship the reviewer, hearing the evidence against him, and being addressed by the prisoner in an unknown tongue, for which no interpreter can be found in the court or in the city, will, with irritated impatience, sentence him to the stocks for seven days, which under no circumstances can do him much harm, and which may teach him the advantage of learning to speak plain English. Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Tennyson, Carlyle, Browning, Whitman—each in his day has stood in the stocks, and every fool has been free to throw a cabbage-stump or a rotten egg at the convicted culprit. In the case of some of these, perhaps, the sufferings of their late apotheosis have been more severe than the light affliction of their early martyrdom.

When we inquire what were the obstacles that hindered or delayed the recognition of such writers as these, and turn to the utterances of the critics who gave expression to the popular thought or sentiment, we find the accusation of obscurity a constant part of the indictment drawn up against them. The poet has been well termed "a pioneer of beauty," and he may also be a pioneer of passion and of thought. But nothing is more unintelligible, nothing looks more like affectation, folly, or downright madness than enthusiasm for ideals

of beauty which the world has not as yet learnt to accept. If we were asked to name a poem of this century, the beauty of which now imposes itself inevitably on every reader, we might well name Coleridge's "Christabel." But to the *Edinburgh* Reviewer "Christabel" was "a mixture of raving and drivelling;" and he goes on to suggest that the author of the poem may possibly be under medical treatment for insanity. "A more senseless, absurd, and stupid composition," wrote another critic, "has scarcely of late years issued from the press." If we were asked to name the highest poets of the middle of the eighteenth century, we should instantly name Collins and Gray. And of Collins, the great eighteenth century critic, Johnson, wrote, "The grandeur of wildness and the novelty of extravagance were always desired by him, but were not always attained;" and he specifies the faults of "harshness and obscurity" as characteristic of Collins. "My process," he writes contemptuously in his life of Gray, "has now brought me to the *wonderful* 'wonder of wonders,' the two sister odes ['The Progress of Poesy,' and 'The Bard'], by which, though either vulgar ignorance or common sense at first universally rejected them, many have been since persuaded to think themselves delighted. I am one of those that are willing to be pleased, and therefore would gladly find the meaning of the first stanza of 'The Progress of Poetry.'"

The same accusation of obscurity, coupled with the accusation of childish simplicity and puerility, was brought a generation later against the leader of the reaction from Gray's poetical style. In Johnson's place now stood

Jeffrey, as the representative of critical taste, judgment, and sagacity. And Jeffrey was a critic of no ordinary powers; a quick and keen understanding, great versatility of mind, a certain enthusiasm for literary beauty, much wit and fancy, a brilliant manner of setting forth his ideas—these were Jeffrey's gifts. In 1807 appeared two little volumes containing some of the noblest poetry of Wordsworth, his loftiest sonnets, his most radiant and profound poems of Nature, some of his most pathetic renderings of human passion. The collection closed with his great ode on Intimations of Immortality, "beyond doubt," said the *Edinburgh* Reviewer, "the most illegible and unintelligible part of the publication. We can pretend to give no analysis or explanation of it." Four years later the critic of the *Literary Register* lamented the "incomprehensible system of poetry" which was the ruling power in these two volumes of verse; Mr Wordsworth's "drivelling nonsense" was better "calculated to excite disgust and anger" than anything the critic had ever seen. In other words, the poetry of Wordsworth brought a new thing into English literature, and its speech was at first an utterance in an unknown tongue. In 1816 was published "Alastor," the first high achievement of Shelley's adult years. The *Monthly Review* condescended to notice the slender octavo, and pronounced it absolutely unintelligible. "We entreat Mr Shelley," the critic wrote, "for the sake of his reviewers as well as of his other readers (if he has any), to subjoin to his next publication an *ordo*, a glossary and copious notes illustrative of his allusions and explanatory of his meaning." Seventeen

years later the earliest of Mr Browning's dramatic monologues, "Pauline," appeared. A copy fell into the hands of John Stuart Mill, then a young man, and known as a literary critic. Struck by its originality and power, he wrote to the editor of the magazine to which he was a contributor, requesting that he might be allowed to review the poem in the next number. The editor replied that unluckily it had been already reviewed. On turning to the criticism of "Pauline," Mr Mill found that it had at least the merit of brevity, for it was contained in a single line: "Pauline, a piece of pure bewilderment." Only within the last two or three years has the charge of unintelligible obscurity brought against Mr Browning been silently dropped; and now we are in the most correct fashion if we express surprise that any one should ever have found himself perplexed in the tangle of the most involved period of "Sordello." The whirligig of time, in the course of half a century, has brought in its revenge.

When we hear this accusation of obscurity brought against a great writer, we may remember a word of Goethe: "He who would reproach an author with obscurity, ought first to make an examination of himself, to be sure that he is inwardly clear. A very clear hand may not be legible by twilight." In other words, do you yourself bring light or darkness to the study of the author? do you bring attention, clearness and energy of mind, a patient receptive spirit, a readiness to respond to what is admirable even though it be strange?—for with all these you bring light, and without them you bring darkness, or at least a shadow.

A second accusation, sometimes justly but often recklessly advanced, which tells with great effect for a time against a certain class of poets and artists, is the accusation of immorality. If it can be coupled with the charge of obscurity it tells with double force. Instead of obscurity, the less courteous word "nonsense" is often employed, and if it can be represented that the poet invites his reader to partake not merely of a dish of clotted nonsense, but also of nonsense which is poisonous, a twofold motive is supplied for turning away from what he offers.

Now this accusation of immorality, as brought against a great writer, may be wholly false, or it may be true in some respects, but false in being advanced absolutely and without qualification. The entire tendency of a writer may be towards righteousness, and he may be reviled as an immoral writer. Or, what more frequently happens, his dominant influence on character may be potent for good, but on certain side issues he may be ethically unsound; these are detached from the whole, and are represented as central. A writer who brings to his age some new and precious gift, some quickening of moral sensibility, some reinforcement of spiritual faith and spiritual passion, is peculiarly exposed to this reproach. We find it hard to conceive, and yet it is a fact, that to the early *Edinburgh* Reviewers the writings of Southey and Wordsworth seemed dangerous in their moral tendency. Where, asked the guardian of public morals in the *Edinburgh Review*, did the Lake School find its inspiration? Primarily in the anti-social and distempered sensibility of Rousseau,

his discontent with the present constitution of society, his paradoxical morality, and his perpetual hankering after some unattainable state of voluptuous virtue and perfection. Discontent with the present constitution of society—that was the high crime of Wordsworth and Southey in their following of Rousseau, and to be virtuous means to be satisfied with things as they are. So it was also with Charles Kingsley when he published his "Yeast;" the little leaven of Christian socialism might possibly leaven the whole lump of society. With the eager anger which inflames celestial minds, the *Guardian*, representing orthodox English churchmanship, flung against Kingsley its vile accusations of profligacy and heresy. "It is the countenance the writer gives to the worst tendencies of the day," so wrote the *Guardian* reviewer, "and the manner in which he conceals loose morality in a dress of high-sounding and philosophical phraseology, which calls for plain and decided condemnation." But immorality may be of many kinds, and to be a child of the devil, if we may trust the derivation of that name of the father of lies, is before all else to be a false accuser. [The truth indeed is great, and will prevail; but sometimes the lie does not rot until its work is done, and the truth prevails too late,

"When none cares whether it prevail or not."]

Perhaps the most grievous wrong is done when the accusation has a fragment of truth to countenance it. Such was the case with the charge of immorality so persistently brought against the poetry of Shelley. Setting aside the crude work of his boyhood, there is

undoubtedly in Shelley's writings an element of unsound thinking, derived in the main from the teaching of Godwin's "Political Justice," which may be fairly termed immoral. To be unjust to the past out of which we have grown is immoral, and to the eighteen hundred years of Christendom Shelley is constantly unjust. It is the part of impiety to think scorn of our heritage from the ages which have helped us to whatever we possess of wisdom and generous passion, and the power of high resolve; and Shelley's gaze was so ardently fixed upon the future, and so dazzled by the vision of things yet to be, that he could not estimate aright the precious increment of good received from many generations of men. But the central influence of Shelley's poetry was on the side of justice, charity, beauty, truth. He, more than most other writers, inspires his reader with an unquenchable aspiration after ideals of beauty, love, gentleness, truth, justice, purity. And it was his special glory to have kept in vital relation with the spiritual forces issuing from the last century, and full of constructive power for modern society, at a period characterised all over Europe by terror and base reaction.

Let us remember that a chief function of the poet is to free, to arouse, to dilate the consciousness of his reader. True to the abiding laws of morality, he is often compelled to revolt against the temporary moral conventions of the Scribe or the Pharisee, for whom the quickening truth has hardened into a crust of tradition, which impedes all free growth and movement. It is his part to be through his finer sympathies and through his

imagination a moral pioneer, discovering new duties of the heart or hand or head. But to quicken a new life in men, he is sometimes compelled to wage war against a morality which has stiffened into mere routine. In every epoch when the moral ardour of man has been roused, and a vigorous movement initiated in favour of a higher or a wider conception of human life, the reformers have had to face the reproach of removing ancient landmarks—which indeed they do—and of endangering the settled order of society. We can easily conceive how dangerous to virtue the doctrines of Christianity must have appeared to an old Roman moralist—how vulgar and popular must have appeared the new emotional movement. And it sometimes may happen that the reformers, though rendering a high service to humanity, are driven, in this direction or in that, by the pressure of the ideas forcing them forward, or by the exaltation of their own enthusiasm, beyond the bounds; they are human instruments of high truths, and it were strange if they did not mingle an element of infirmity and error with what they achieve. Our duty towards them in such a case is to recognise the error, to condemn it, to forgive the erring mortal, and to remain loyal to him and his cause. Thus at the present moment, should we see a woman of pure and courageous heart widening, by life or by literature, the accepted ideal of woman's part in the world, and asserting her right to spend her treasures of love and devotion in the attempt to check or remove some of the foul wrongs and injuries and unwholesome sores of humanity, and should she be betrayed, in life or in literature, into error or excess

through generous zeal, or the pressure of her convictions, we must judge that error or excess severely, and condemn it sternly, and forgive it freely, and remain true to our new reformer and the cause which she, encumbered with weakness, represents.

Let us then understand that these two reproaches brought against an original writer—the reproach of obscurity and the reproach of immorality—may in fact signify that he offers some precious gift of thought or passion to the world, which as yet the world is unwilling to receive. Mr Mill, in his essay on Alfred de Vigny, contrasted admirably two types of poet or artist—the Conservative poet and the Movement poet. The Conservative poet, resting his inventions on the broad basis of a settled faith, the broad basis laid by the past, will attain, with little struggle if he be a man of high powers and rich human sympathy, a high level of excellence, and he may receive an immediate and wide recognition. Such was Walter Scott. The Movement poet is in some respects less fortunate. He wings his way towards radiant apparitions of faiths, hopes, charities, whose feet have not yet touched the earth. Borne forward with aspiring courage, he may soar straight and high, but also he may be caught in tempestuous gales too strong for him, and be whirled he knows not where. Such a writer is peculiarly exposed to the accusations of obscurity and immorality; and it is quite possible that for lack of the safeguards of organised social life, from which perhaps he has been unjustly cast forth as a rebel, now and again failing of his radiant heights, and baffled and dispirited, he may in fact sink below the level on which they tread safe, who have no wings to soar.

An immense and sudden popularity can belong only to the writer who interprets into art the settled feelings and established convictions of his time, or to him who stands at the head of some large advancing movement already organised. It can never belong, at the outset, to one who goes forward alone as a pioneer. And popularity, of course, may be suddenly attained by the charlatan or the lucky retailer of moral platitudes. From count of copies sold we cannot determine whether the fortunate author be a Tupper or a Scott. But there is one indication of the presence of some exceptional quality of genius which never fails. We can point to no writer who drew early to his side a small band of eminent disciples, and at the same time suffered shame and scoffing or total neglect from the crowd, who did not in the end prove a power in literature, and gradually win acceptance from the world. Such was Wordsworth's position in the opening years of our century; such a little later was Shelley's position. Such was Carlyle's half a century since, and Mr Browning's at a date more recent. Such also was Mr Whitman's position until of late, when a considerable company has gathered to his side and the voice of opposition has almost fallen silent.

Now, if any one of us be drawn towards a great writer, and resolve that in spite of obstacles he will interpret, for his own use or that of others, the writer's meaning and message, the first thing to attend to is this —that the author and his work be regarded as a whole bearing on life as a whole.* Our prime object should be

* I borrow a phrase from Mr Frederic Harrison, who writes in his essay on "The Choice of Books": "There is this stamp upon every stroke of eighteenth century work—the habit of regarding things as wholes bearing on life as a whole."

to get into living relation with a man; and by his means, with the good forces of nature and humanity which play in and through him. This aim condemns at once all reading for pride and vain-glory as wholly astray, and all reading for scholarship and specialised knowledge as partial and insufficient. We must read not for these, but for *life;* we must read in order to live. Only let us bear in mind that in order to live our best life we do not chiefly need advice, direction, instruction (though these also we may put to use); we need above all an access of power rightly directed. And hence we must guard against the growth of a spirit which is perpetually craving the didactic, or narrowing power into preaching. There are many great works of literature and art from which we learn little or nothing, at least consciously or in set term and phrase; but we go to them as a swimmer goes to the sea. We enter bodily, and breast the waves, and laugh and are glad, and come forth renewed and saturated with the breeze and the brine, a sharer in the free and boundless vitality of our lover, the sea. We have won health and vigour, although the sea has only sung its mysterious choral song, and the waves have clapped their hands around us, nor has ocean once straitened his lips to utter a little maxim or a moral sentence. And with such writers we may be trustful and generous, and put aside the petty spiritual prudence which it is well that we should make use of when we go to one who is chiefly a teacher. Such an oceanic writer as Shakspere or Goethe may contain within his vastness some things that belong to the rankness and garbage of the earth; but so antiseptic

is his large and free vitality, played upon by the sun and breeze, so wholesome is his invigorating saltness, that we may dash fearlessly across the breakers, and quit his sands and shallows for a gleeful adventure in the deep.

We are often instructed to enter on the study of a great writer in a spirit of reverenee, and this is well said when it means that we should be neither impertinent nor impatient; but it is ill said if it tend to foster in us the spirit of hero-worship. Approach a great writer rather in the spirit of cheerful and trustful fraternity; this is better than hero-worship; and do homage only to the eternal laws of Nature ~~or~~ And of God. The great master is better pleased to find a brother than a worshipper or a serf; and only to a brother, no matter though he be a younger brother, will he lay bare his heart. Surely the master has no particular affection for the idolatrous coterie that reprints his worst verses, with a monograph on the number of occasions on which he turned the loops of his y's and g's to left or right. This is neither literature nor life, but pedantry and puerility. It was not because Carlyle was a hero-worshipper that he wrote so admirably of Burns and Johnson; it was because he found in each a brother-man, and took the hand of each in the close grasp of fraternity. If any author or artist lead us to a dim shrine, and bid us bow before the idol of himself, he secludes and shuts us in from what is larger and better than himself; but indeed what a great writer desires and will do for us, if we permit him, is to bring us forth into the sun and air, and give us strength and courage

to enjoy them, and wisdom to go our way, cheerful wanderers over a wide earth under an open heaven.

Approaching a great writer in this spirit of courageous and affectionate fraternity, we need all our forces and all our craft for the friendly encounter. If we love ease and lethargy, let us turn in good time and fly. The interpretation of literature, like the interpretation of Nature, is no mere record of facts; it is no catalogue of the items which make up a book—such catalogues and analyses of contents encumber our histories of literature with some of their dreariest pages. The interpretation of literature exhibits no series of dead items, but rather the life and power of one mind at play upon another mind duly qualified to receive and manifest these. Hence, one who would interpret the work of a master must summon up all his powers, and must be alive at as many points as possible. He who approaching his author as a whole, bearing upon life as a whole, is himself alive at the greatest possible number of points, will be the best and truest interpreter. For he will grasp what is central, and at the same time will be sensitive to the value of all details, which details he will perceive not isolated, but in connection with one another and with the central life to which they belong and from which they proceed.

In the first stage of approach, however, the critic, while all the time full of athletic force, must cunningly assume a passive aspect, and to do so he must put restraint upon his own vivacity and play of mind. His aim is now to obtain a faithful impression of the object. His second movement of mind will be one of recoil and

resilience, whereby having received a pure impression of the object, he tries to surprise and lay hold of the power which has produced that impression. And these are the two chief processes of the critical spirit in literature. To make a pure observation or receive a faithful impression calls for a strenuous patience and a disinterestedness that are rare. "Receptiveness," George Eliot has said, "is a rare and massive power like fortitude." "We are so ready," says Goethe, "to mix up our own imaginations, opinions, judgments, with what comes under our notice, that we do not long retain the quiet position of observers." The peculiar difficulty in the study of literature and art of observing the object purely arises from the fact that in making the observation it is not merely the intellect which is employed, but also the emotions. We must not only see accurately, but feel vividly and truly. Of what value, for example, were any observation of a lyric of Shelley's, unless we recognise the peculiar delight which it excites? And in order to do this, we must feel that delight vividly and aright. But the moment our emotions are called into play we cease to be guided by the dry light of intellect; a personal factor enters to disturb our calculations. If only we could be an instrument of rich tone and ample compass, perfectly in tune, on which the poet might play, capable of rendering back with faultless vibration the meaning of his every touch. This some of us can never be, or anything resembling this. In matters of art and literature there is an election of grace. The poet, it is said, is born, not made; he is in fact both born and made. The lover of literature is also born—born with a finer sensitiveness

than other men, and Pope was in the right when he said of poet and critic:

> "Both must alike from heav'n derive their light,
> These born to judge, as well as those to write."

But happily the gift of a capacity to enjoy what is beautiful is widely distributed, and where it exists in any degree much can be done to develop the capacity. In a very rare and high degree, however, the gift of natural sensitiveness is not common; and where it is intense in quality it is sometimes limited in range. To feel widely and at the same time to feel exquisitely is an exceptional gift. From those who lie open to only a few impressions, and who respond to those few impressions with peculiar intensity, arise the sects and heresies of literature and art—unless indeed they acknowledge their own limited range, and put their gift to wisest use. But as the sects and heresies in religion have often been witnesses at a particular time for a neglected truth, so also have been the sects and heresies in art and literature. What constitutes their doctrine a heresy is not the portion of truth which it possesses, but the falsehood which substitutes the lesser truth for the greater, or a part for the whole. They gather around some master—never one of universal power, but a master of narrow range and exquisite gift—and they call themselves after his name, and make his special qualities their standard of judgment. They are fastidious, and fastidiousness always means the presence of a narrow, intense, sensibility, lacking the larger and more generous passions which arise from rich sensitiveness to the chief sources of emotion in human life. And even of exquisiteness

and subtlety, the very highest kind is attained only through that larger and richer sensibility. The Venus of Melos is not only freer and nobler than the most adored ingenuity of the Grosvenor Gallery, but her beauty is finer, subtler, and more exquisite.

Those who feel sanely and nobly in matters of literature and art keep themselves in vital relation with the great facts and laws of life and nature, and refuse to immure themselves in any monastery of art, or of so-called culture. And the great facts and laws of life and nature they find made visible and vocal in the highest works of the universal masters of all ages and lands. In keeping close to Homer, Sophocles, Shakspere, Dante, Molière, Cervantes, Goethe, we keep close not to literature merely but to life. With them we are in the great highway of life; with them we rock in no sequestered bay, but cross Atlantic and Pacific Seas. If therefore we would exclude, as far as possible, a personal disturbing element in our recognition and judgment of literature and art, and also exclude the prejudices and partialities of the sects and schools, we shall do well to keep constantly in the company of some one of the universal writers, which means keeping in relation to the great facts and laws of life as rendered most truly and nobly into literature. Thus we shall be members of the One Catholic Church of literature, and shall run small risk of being seduced by the allurement of any sect or heresy, for indeed we shall be able to recognise and appropriate for a catholic purpose whatever neglected truth the sect or heresy may proclaim. If we are faithful children of this Catholic Church of literature and art, it will not

greatly matter who may be the bishop of our particular diocese—Shakspere, Homer, Dante, Goethe, Cervantes, Molière; any one of them will teach us the catholic doctrine of art—"quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus." Only let him really shape and form us, let him exert his full influence, let him drive the truth deep into our heart—to accomplish which he must have ample opportunity and time. We shall not grow really wiser by running from teacher to teacher, quitting each before he has done half his work. It is well perhaps to have a notion as to what are the hundred best books; but it is folly to suppose that we can really make acquaintance with half a hundred teachers. Each teaches the truth universal, but in his own way and with his own methods, and to submit ourselves to any one is a discipline. It is a moral impossibility while we are undergoing the peculiar and exacting discipline of Goethe to undergo at the same time the peculiar and exacting discipline of Dante. But perhaps in the course of years we can do this; and some of us who are studious of perfection may strive to pass through various rules of discipline, in attempting which we should choose masters like Dante and Goethe, who, while each one of the greatest of all time, and each an interpreter of the catholic truth of human life, yet differ, each from the other, as widely as is permitted to interpreters of the truth universal. To submit ourselves to as many masters as may be counted on the fingers of one hand, is perhaps as much as can really be accomplished in a lifetime; for we too have to live, and our master's teaching is never more than notional unless we put it into use and effect in our own lives.

Mr Matthew Arnold has recommended that we should always have in our mind lines and expressions of the great masters, which may serve, he says, as a touchstone to other poetry. "Of course," he adds, "we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them; it may be very dissimilar. But if we have any tact, we shall find them, when we have lodged them well in our minds, an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality in all other poetry which we may place beside them." He instances, among others, the words in Homer addressed by Achilles to the suppliant Priam:—

καὶ σέ, γέρον, τὸ πρὶν μὲν ἀκούομεν ὄλβιον εἶναι·

"Nay, and thou too, old man, in former days wast, as we hear, happy;" and Dante's simple, but perfect, single line:

"In la sua volontade è nostra pace,"

"In His will is our peace;" and Shakspere's:

"Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brain
In cradle of the rude imperious surge;"

and Milton's:

"Darken'd so, yet shone
Above them all the archangel: but his face
Deep scars of thunder had entrench'd, and care
Sat on his faded cheek."

It would need Mr Matthew Arnold's tact to assay poetry by such a method as this; but after all only his metaphor is wrong, not his meaning. Such a passage of flawless poetry as any one of those quoted is not a touchstone to apply to other passages of poetry, but a tuning-fork to ring for ourselves; and if we do not

answer true, we had better not proceed with our observation of any other piece of poetry, for we cannot hope that our observation will be pure. We are out of tune with the highest.

While submitting ourselves patiently and disinterestedly to the impression of the object, and holding our own vivacity in check, we are not really passive. We are not as wax which receives the impression of a seal, for in this case the wax is instinct with life, and moves towards the seal, and clings around and into it. In this patient energizing of the mind to receive a true impression or to make a pure observation, we should above all endeavour to distinguish the relative values in the object; what is central in the object should be central for us, and each detail should be perceived in relation to the centre. There is a criticism which delights in pointing out the "beauties" of an author, sometimes to the obscuring of the total impression of his work. In this criticism Leigh Hunt was pre-eminent; his pleasure in dainty phrases and exquisite lines was so quick and fine, that he could not let them remain quietly in their right places, but in his eager and almost sensuous delight he must put in his thumb, and pick out his poetical plums, exclaiming, "What a good critic am I!" With Leigh Hunt the parts become often more important than the whole. He emphasizes and underlines each curious felicity of diction until we forget that fine lines and phrases must grow out of the heart of the subject, if they are not to wither like the rootless blossoms stuck in a child's flower-bed. And yet Leigh Hunt was a critic with many admirable qualities, and was swift and gene-

rous in his recognition of genius as yet unnoted by the world. What other critic has ever had the happiness to make discovery in one short article of two such poets as those discovered by Leigh Hunt in his article entitled "Young Poets," in the *Examiner* for 1816? One of the two had published a slender volume of verse in the preceding spring, and one had printed a few sonnets in a newspaper. The first of these became the author of "Prometheus Unbound;" and the second the author of "Hyperion."*

Such indicating of what is obvious as we often find in Leigh Hunt's essays has been nicknamed "signpost criticism." Yet he must indeed be a traveller of rare experience and sagacity who has never felt grateful for a signpost. On a straight unbroken road it is an impertinence to advise the wayfarer how to advance. But among mountain tracts, where the mists descend, we may well consult a guide. And to study any great author is to traverse a difficult mountain range, or if he be an author of vast width, as Goethe was, it is to traverse a series of mountain ranges. A modest pedestrian, if he desire before nightfall to reach some definite point (and the night at farthest is not far off) may rejoice to be saved from objectless wanderings or to be turned aside from entering a cul-de-sac.

When, after a period of patience and observation, the student of literature has obtained a faithful impression of the object, he casts his self-restraint aside, and leaps or darts forward to discover if possible the law govern-

* A third name included in Leigh Hunt's poetical prophecy was that of Keats' friend, John Hamilton Reynolds.

ing the phenomena which he has observed. They are not isolated phenomena; they belong to an organic whole; they are determined by the law of its life. What, then, is that law? Sometimes the unity of a work of literature or art is found in a single dominant conception; sometimes in a dominant passion; sometimes in a single, low-toned mood of mind; sometimes in a harmonious sequence or suite of emotions; sometimes in a character; sometimes in an action; sometimes in action, character and passion united. In each case we form a hypothesis as to the motive of the composition, and endeavour to colligate the facts under that hypothesis. Should our hypothesis fail to colligate the facts, we reject it and try another and yet another. Not that the skilful critic of literature will care to present the public with anything which has a scientific or pseudo-scientific aspect. His theory as to the motive of a work of art is not obtruded as theory, but it determines his point of view, and enables him to exhibit the life of the composition, where otherwise he could do no more than set forth a series of dead items and details. Occasionally he can at once and without hesitation put his finger on the precise motive of a work —it is some single definite conception. Thus amid all the varied imagery of Keats' "Ode on Melancholy," the idea of the poem stands forth. The melancholy of melancholies, Keats would say to us, is that of joy which must pass away, and of beauty which must fade and die.

> "She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die
> And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu."

And here we are fortunate in being able to watch the idea in its origin, and assist, as it were, at the very act of creation; for we know the earlier opening of the ode, rejected by Keats because the raw-head and bloody-bones conception embodied in those rejected lines was felt to be out of harmony with the general effect of luxurious tenderness.

In studying more complex works we must guard against looking for a thought or a truth, or an abstract notion, or a doctrine, or a passion, or even a character or an action as central; and especially in the study of dramatic poetry we should resist the tendency to excessive simplifying of motives. Ordinarily in the drama — always in the Shaksperean drama — an action, a character, and a passion are inextricably twisted together to make the central knot of life, the heart, which sends its life-blood pulsing through every member of the whole. It is otherwise with the drama of ideal passion, in which the characters are created as mere vehicles for the passion which forms the real subject of the play. Thus in each of the dramas of Shakspere's great contemporary, Marlowe, the protagonist is a single dominant passion, exalted to heroic proportions, and using the character of the chief person of the drama as the field for its display. In "Tamburlaine," the Scythian king is of dramatic value only as he incarnates the lust of power, which finds its manifestation in him. Nor in the play which bears his name is Dr Faustus so much the dramatic centre as is the lust of knowledge —of knowledge as a means to power—which possesses and dominates the ambitious student of the magic arts.

This is not Shakspere's method. And if we would learn by unhappy example the danger of the attempt to reduce any one of Shakspere's plays to an abstraction or an idea, we have but to glance into the criticisms of the "Merchant of Venice" by eminent German scholars. It was Shakspere's purpose in the "Merchant of Venice," says Gervinus, to delineate man in relation to property. No, declares Ulrici, for its ideal unity lies in the principle *summum jus summa injuria*, a view on which Rötscher improves by exhibiting the topic of the play as "the dialectics of abstract rights." For a modest English critic the play has no other centre than the Merchant placed between Shylock and Portia, with the passion of generosity and mercy set over against the passion of vindictive hate, and a three-times varied action—the story of the caskets, the story of the pound of flesh, and the story of the rings—strung together upon the thought of how promises and bonds and inherited obligations should be regarded; an action brightly serious in the casket story, tragic in the story of the merchant's bond, and closing with play and laughter in the jest of the betrothal rings.

The happiest moment in a critic's hours of study is when seemingly by some divination, but really as the result of patient observation and thought, he lights upon the central motive of a great work. Then, of a sudden, order begins to form itself from the crowd and chaos of his impressions and ideas. There is a moving hither and thither, a grouping or co-ordinating of all his recent experiences, which goes on of its own accord, and every instant his vision becomes clearer, and

new meanings disclose themselves in what had been lifeless and unilluminated. It seems as if he could even stand by the artist's side and co-operate with him in the process of creating. With such a sense of joy upon him, the critic will think it no hard task to follow the artist to the sources from whence he drew his material—it may be some dull chapter in an ancient chronicle, or some gross tale of passion by an Italian novelist—and he will stand by and watch with exquisite pleasure the artist handling that crude material, and refashioning and refining it, and breathing into it the breath of a higher life. Even the minutest difference of text between an author's earlier and later draft, or a first and second edition, has now become a point not for dull commentatorship, but a point of life, at which he may touch with his finger the pulse of the creator in his fervour of creation.

From each single work of a great author we advance to his total work, and thence to the man himself—to the heart and brain from which all this manifold world of wisdom and wit and passion and beauty has proceeded. Here again, before we address ourselves to the interpretation of the author's mind, we patiently submit ourselves to a vast series of impressions. And in accordance with Bacon's maxim that a prudent interrogation is the half of knowledge, it is right to provide ourselves with a number of well-considered questions which we may address to our author. Let us cross-examine him as students of mental and moral science, and find replies in his written words. Are his senses vigorous and fine? Does he see colour as well as form? Does he delight

in all that appeals to the sense of hearing—the voices of Nature, and the melody and harmonies of the art of man? Thus Wordsworth, exquisitely organised for enjoying and interpreting all natural, and, if we may so say, homeless and primitive sounds, had little feeling for the delights of music. Can he enrich his poetry by gifts from the sense of smell, as did Keats; or is his nose, like Wordsworth's, an idle promontory projecting into a desert air? Has he, like Browning, a vigorous pleasure in all strenuous muscular movements; or does he, like Shelley, live rapturously in the finest nervous thrills? How does he experience and interpret the feeling of sex, and in what parts of his entire nature does that feeling find its elevating connections and associations? What are his special intellectual powers? Is his intellect combative or contemplative? What are the laws which chiefly preside over the associations of his ideas? What are the emotions which he feels most strongly? and how do his emotions coalesce with one another? Wonder, terror, awe, love, grief, hope, despondency, the benevolent affections, admiration, the religious sentiment, the moral sentiment, the emotion of power, irascible emotion, ideal emotion—how do these make themselves felt in and through his writings? What is his feeling for the beautiful, the sublime, the ludicrous? Is he of weak or vigorous will? In the conflict of motives, which class of motives with him is likely to predominate? Is he framed to believe or framed to doubt? Is he prudent, just, temperate, or the reverse of these? These and such like questions are not to be crudely and formally proposed, but are to

be used with tact; nor should the critic press for hard and definite answers, but know how skilfully to glean its meaning from an evasion. He is a dull cross-examiner who will invariably follow the scheme which he has thought out and prepared beforehand, and who cannot vary his questions to surprise or beguile the truth from an unwilling witness. But the tact which comes from natural gift and from experience, may be well supported by something of method—method well hidden away from the surface and from sight.

This may be termed the psychological method of study. But we may also follow a more objective method. Taking the chief themes with which literature and art are conversant—God, external Nature, humanity—we may inquire how our author has dealt with each of these. What is his theology, or his philosophy of the universe? By which we mean no abstract creed or doctrine, but the tides and currents of feeling and of faith as well as the tendencies and conclusions of the intellect. Under what aspect has this goodly frame of things, in whose midst we are, revealed itself to him? How has he regarded and interpreted the life of man? Under each of these great themes a multitude of subordinate topics are included. And alike in this and in what we have termed the psychological method of study, we shall gain double results if we examine a writer's works in the order of their chronology, and thus become acquainted with the growth and development of his powers, and the widening and deepening of his relations with man, with external Nature, and with that Supreme Power, unknown yet well known, of which Nature and

man are the manifestation. As to the study of an artist's technical qualities, this, by virtue of the fact that he is an artist, is of capital importance; and it may often be associated with the study of that which his technique is employed to express and render—the characteristics of his mind, and of the vision which he has attained of the external universe, of humanity, and of God.

Of all our study the last end and aim should be to ascertain how a great writer or artist has served the life of man; to ascertain this, to bring home to ourselves as large a portion as may be of the gain wherewith he has enriched human life, and to render access to that store of wisdom, passion, and power, easier and surer for others. If our study does not directly or indirectly enrich the life of man, it is but a drawing of vanity with cart-ropes, a weariness to the flesh, or at best a busy idleness.

SPENSER, THE POET AND TEACHER.

In England of the age of Elizabeth what place is filled by the poetry of Spenser? What blank would be made by its disappearance? In what, for each of us who love that poetry, resides its special virtue? Shall we say in answer to these questions that Spenser is the weaver of spells, the creator of illusions, the enchanter of the Elizabethan age; and that his name is to us a word of magic by which we conjure away the pain of actual life, and obtain entrance into a world of faery? Was Spenser, as a poet of our own time names himself, "the idle singer" of his day—that day not indeed "an empty day," but one filled with heroic daring and achievement? While Raleigh was exploring strange streams of the New World, while Drake was chasing the Spaniard, while Bacon was seeking for the principles of a philosophy which should enrich man's life, while Hooker, with the care of a wise master-builder, was laying the foundation of polity in the National Church, where was Spenser? Was he forgetful of England, forgetful of earth, lulled and lying in some bower of fantasy, or moving in a dream among imaginary champions of chivalry, distressed damsels, giants and dragons and satyrs and savage men, or shepherds who pipe and shepherdesses who dance for ever in a serene Arcady?

Assuredly it was not thus that a great Englishman of a later age thought of Spenser. When Milton entered upon his manhood, he entered upon a warfare; the peaceful Horton days, days of happy ingathering of varied culture, days of sweet repose amid rural beauty, were past and gone; and he stood with loins girt, prepared for battle on behalf of liberty. And then, in London, when London was a vast arsenal in which weapons were forging for the defence of truth and freedom, Milton in his moment of highest and most masculine ardour, as he wrote his speech on behalf of unlicensed printing, thought of Spenser. It was not as a dreamer that Milton thought of him. Spenser had been a power with himself in youth, when he, "the lady of his college," but such a lady as we read of in "Comus," grew in virginal beauty and virginal strength. He had listened to Spenser's "sage and solemn tunes,"

> "Of turneys and of trophies hung;
> Of forests and enchantments drear,
> Where more is meant than meets the ear."

And now, in his manhood, when all of life has grown for him so grave, so glorious with heroic effort, Milton looks back and remembers his master, and he remembers him not as an idle singer, not as a dreamer of dreams, but as "our sage and serious Spenser, whom I dare to name a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas."

A teacher,—what is the import of this? "The true use of Spenser," says a poet of our own day, Mr J. R. Lowell, "is as a gallery of pictures which we visit as the mood takes us, and where we spend an hour or two at a time, long enough to sweeten our perceptions, not so long

as to cloy them." And again: "Whenever in the 'Faery Queen' you come suddenly on the moral, it gives you a shock of unpleasant surprise, a kind of grit, as when one's teeth close on a bit of gravel in a dish of strawberries and cream." This, then, is the "Faery Queen"—a dish of strawberries and cream mixed up unfortunately with a good deal of grit. And as for the allegory, we may "fairly leave it on one side;"* Spenser employed it to "convince the scorners that poetry might be seriously useful, and show Master Bull his new way of making fine words butter parsnips, in a rhymed moral primer." Shall we accept this view, or that of Milton—"a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas?" Was Spenser such a teacher "sage and serious" to his own age? If so, does he remain such a teacher for this age of ours?

Let us put the question in another way, and inquire, What was the highest function which an English poet in the second half of the sixteenth century could fulfil? The death of the mediæval world and the birth of the modern world had been the achievements of Italy. In Italy the fire of intellectual life had been gathered as on a hearth, and its flame leaped highest; it was from Italy that the light and warmth diffused themselves to other lands. To Italian seamen we owe the discovery of the New World: Columbus was a Genoese, John Cabot was a Venetian. To Italian students we owe the rediscovery of the Old World of classical art, poetry, and

* With which contrast Coleridge's words, "No one can appreciate Spenser without some reflection on the nature of allegorical writing;" and Mr Ruskin's painstaking attempt in "Stones of Venice" to interpret the allegory of Book I.

eloquence. The great thinkers of Greece were no longer denaturalised in the interests of an effete scholastic system; the pillars of the Parthenon were not employed to prop the crumbling walls of a chapter-house. Plato became at least an equal master with Aristotle, and in Plato the humanists found that beauty and enthusiasm which were needed to arouse and satisfy the imaginative reason. At the same time the architecture of Italy passed from its period of free and varied experiment—experiment nobly inventive—to its period of fulfilled attainment. To the first thirty years of the sixteenth century belong the painters who represent the culmination of the great art-movement of Italy. Life in that southern land seemed like a blossoming plant with petals deep of dye and rich in floating perfume; like a flame swift, delicate, and aspiring.

But there was a dark side to the Italian Renaissance. The Church and the world had alike too much forgotten that true humanism includes a noble morality. In Rome, at the heart of Christendom, were fraud, avarice, ambition, violence, foul living, effeminacy. And the Church possessed no monopoly of vices. A tendency to materialism in philosophy coincided in point of time with a practical cynicism as to what is most spiritual in human conduct and character. Sensuality was elaborated into an art. "The immorality of the Italians," says Mr Symonds, making a just distinction, "was not that of beasts; it rather resembled that of devils."

In such a moral environment had appeared for a short time a man possessed by the old prophetic fire. Over against Lorenzo, with his splendour and his culture, arose

the face—a brand under the darkness of the cowl—and the harsh condemnatory voice of Savonarola. It was no part of Savonarola's mission to assail, like Luther, the dogma of the Church; he was a reformer of morals, not of faith; and he remained a monk. He came as a prophet to announce a judgment. When his voice rang in the Duomo "the walls re-echoed with sobs and wailings." The painter could no longer paint, the man of culture could no longer trifle, while the awful issues of life and death were pending. Fra Bartolommeo bore his studies of the nude to the pyre, and flung them among the other vanities doomed to destruction. Pico della Mirandula, the young scholar who at thirty had mastered all learning, shuddered as he listened to the voice of the preacher; he forsook the world, and wore the frock and hood of St Dominic. So wrought on tender and beautiful souls the truths set forth by Savonarola. But Savonarola fell; Christ was no longer king of Florence, and Italy went its way to an age of impotence and shame.

Now the question arose, "How is this revival of learning, this new enthusiasm about beauty, this new and strong delight in man and in the life of man, to fare with the nations of the North?" Will those nations side with Lorenzo and the humanists, or with Savonarola and his Puritans? Or is it possible to reconcile these two contending forces? At first in England the humanism which had travelled from the South connected itself with religion. The "new learning" was a learning in the service of God. It marked an epoch in the spiritual history of our country when John Colet lectured at Oxford on the epistles of St Paul, dwelling in his

criticism on the human characteristics of those writings, and insisting upon their relation rather to conduct than to dogma. Erasmus, with all his classical refinement, with all his satiric play, was a reformer; his "Praise of Folly" and his "Colloquies" are more than balanced by his "New Testament" and his "St Jerome." The group of men which included these scholars, distinguished as it was by culture and learning, was comparatively little influenced by those elements of the Renaissance which addressed themselves chiefly to the senses and the imagination. No great creator of imaginative work in English literature felt the breath of the Italian Renaissance during that first half of the sixteenth century. In Skelton there is a morning gale; we feel the breath of a new day. But Skelton was reckless, and asserted his individuality too extravagantly. He is a little Rabelais, full of *verve*, learned, free-spoken; capable at times of a certain frank and delicate charm. The palace of Art was not to be taken by violence, and the disorderly rabble of Skeltonical rhymes, laughing as they advance, presently fall back defeated from its outer wall. The direct influence of Italy is first seen conspicuously in the verses of Wyatt and Surrey. That was a time of gloom and harshness in which their sonnets and rondeaux made their appearance. We cherish the daffodil of early spring for its own sake, and yet more because it is the herald of a thousand blossoms which lead us on to the rose:

> "O love-star of the unbeloved March,
> When cold and shrill
> Forth flows beneath a low dim-lighted arch
> The wind that beats sharp crag and barren hill,
> And keeps unfilmed the lately torpid rill."

So we feel to the poems of the "courtly makers," Surrey and Wyatt. Returning to them from the poetry of the close of Elizabeth's reign, their verses seem deficient in varied colour and rich perfume. The half-uncertain twitter of other tiny songsters in *Tottel's Miscellany*, whose notes vainly imitate the clear melancholy-amorous notes of Petrarch, are less important for their own sakes than because they announce that the winter of poetry is over, and the love-making of spring is in the air. As yet there is indeed little to sing about; the skies are grey; but the singers will at least try their voices. *Tottel's Miscellany* is like a tuning of instruments before the symphony opens. In the days of Henry, Edward, and Mary, the graver mind of England was concerned about other and weightier matters than the fictive sorrows of an Italianated sonneteer. There was the great struggle, swaying backward and forward, for the free circulation of an English Bible; there were the fires of Smithfield to kindle or to quench; there were the service books of the Anglican Church to compose and recompose. The contention of the Churches had not been favourable to literature and culture. Erasmus, when he shrank from Luther's violences of theological war, had foreseen this; the fine irony of the humanist reformer, with all such delicate-tempered weapons, must needs appear ineffective to those who endeavoured to emulate the hearty sledge-hammer strokes of the theological reformer. In England classical studies declined; at the University of Grocyn and Linacre Greek was almost forgotten.

Was England, then, to have a literary Renaissance, a new birth of the imagination, or not? Was the Refor-

mation essentially hostile to such a Renaissance? Might it not be that some man at once of fine imaginative genius and of fine moral temper was destined to arise, who should bring into harmony the best elements of the religious movement and the best elements of the artistic movement? Some preparation, as it were, for the advent of such a writer had been made. The question between the Churches in England was virtually settled; the nation, working in its own large practical way, had found a faith. An Englishman born about the middle of the sixteenth century might enter upon a heritage of belief; the moral and spiritual forces of the time were organised, and were strong; they had not yet stiffened into conventions or decayed into traditions. It was in some respects a happy time for a young man of aspiring moral temper. From day to day the national life of England was mounting to the fulness of the flood. In the Queen the nation had found an ideal centre; loyalty to her became identical with loyalty to England. Much of the homage which at first strikes us as servility was like the devotion of a soldier to his banner: on the English banner was inscribed "Elizabeth." The overgrown power of Spain lay open to attack like a huge galleon hung upon by some persistent and persecuting seadog. The spirit of adventure and enterprise was astir. In the little seaports bronzed mariners told marvellous tales of islands in far ocean, and trackless rivers, and mines of silver, and a city of gold. In town and country there was more of mirth and merrymaking than had been known since Chaucer's pilgrims jingled their reins Canterburyward. The great nobles gathered around

their sovereign, and were proud to bear their part in the pageantry of a court. Gay fashions of dress were imported from the Continent. Ideas were attired in fantastic forms of speech on the lips of peeress and of page: when the tide of life runs free it must have its little laughing eddies. We know how, in the history of an individual man or woman, when shock has followed shock of anguish or of joy, if these do not overwhelm and crush the spirit, they render it coherent and ardent, they transform it from a state of cold obstruction into one molten, glowing mass. So it was with the English nation in the sixteenth century: shock had followed shock; it passed from its period of struggle and pain, of hesitancy and division, to a period of coherence and ardour, when it became natural to think greatly of man, to have a passionate faith in human goodness, a passionate apprehension of evil, to hope high things, to dare and to achieve noble and arduous things.

The time had come for England to possess her poet. It could not be a matter of doubt after the year 1579 who that poet was. Spenser did not introduce himself to the world with a fanfare of trumpets, as about to celebrate a triumph. He did not even place his name upon the title-page of the "Shepherd's Calendar." He styled himself "Immerito" (the Undeserving):

> "I never list presume on Parnasse hill,
> But piping low in shade of lowly grove
> I play to please myself, all be it ill."

Yet he could not but be conscious of high powers; and the friend who introduced the volume to English readers, while commenting on the author's diffidence in choosing

the pastoral form, compares him to a young bird who proves his wings before making a higher and wider flight: "So flew Virgil, as not yet well feeling his wings. So flew Mantuane, as not being full sumd. So Petrarque. So Boccace."

In the "Shepherd's Calendar" we discern much of the future writer of the "Faery Queen." It contains the poetical record of his personal griefs as a lover; it expresses his enthusiasm for his art as a poet; his loyalty to the crown as a servant of the Queen; his loyalty to the Reformation as an English churchman; his delight in natural beauty, and in the fairness of woman. It is now gay and sportive, now staid and serious; sensuous ardour and moral wisdom are united in it; the allegorical form in miniature is already employed; it exhibits a mode of idealised treatment of contemporary public affairs not dissimilar in essentials from that afterwards put to use in his romantic epic. The pastoral, with its ideals of peace and simplicity, possessed a singular charm for Europe in the high-wrought and artificial age of the Renaissance. It had a charm for Spenser; but his is not the Arcadian pastoral of Sannazaro and Sidney. Colin and Cuddie keep their flocks upon the hills of Kent; the disdainful Rosalinde, "the widow's daughter of the glen," is a North-country lass. Spenser's power of taking up real objects, persons and incidents, of plunging these in some solvent of the imagination, and then of recreating them —the same and not the same—is manifest throughout. Everything has been submitted to the shaping power of the imagination; everything has been idealised; yet

Spenser does not remove from real life, does not forsake his own country and his own time; he does not shrink from taking a side in controversies then troubling the English Church; he is primarily a poet, but while a poet, he also aspires to be what Milton named him—a teacher. In these poems the little archer, Love, shoots his roguish shafts; Pan is the patron of shepherds; Cynthia sits crowned upon the grassy green. The poet freely appropriates what pleases his fancy in classical or neo-classical mythology; yet at heart he is almost Puritan. Not indeed Puritan in any turning away from innocent delights; not Puritan in casting dishonour on our earthly life, its beauty, its splendour, its joy, its passion; but Puritan as Milton was when he wrote "Lycidas," in his weight of moral purpose, in his love of a grave plainness in religion and of humble laboriousness in those who are shepherds under Christ.

The tenth eclogue of the "Calendar," that for the month of October, is especially characteristic of its author. In it, as stated in the argument, is set out "the perfect pattern of a poet." In what way does Spenser conceive of poetry? We know how in periods which are not creative, periods which are not breathed upon by divine ideas, which are not driven by the urge of strong emotions, poetry comes to be looked on as primarily an art, or even as an accomplishment, and it is treated as if its function were to decorate life much as the artistic upholsterer decorates our houses. At such a time great regard is had to the workmanship of verse exclusive of the burden and inspiration of the song, and elegant little specimens of mosaic or of

enamelling are turned out of the workshops of skilled artists; until the thing descends into a trade. In the creative periods there is not less devotion to form and workmanship; but the devotion is of a less self-conscious kind, because generative powers work in the poet with a rapturous blindness of love, and he thinks of himself less as a master of technique (though he is also this) than as a man possessed by some influence out of and beyond himself, some dominant energy of Nature or of God, to which it is his part to submit, which he cannot lay claim to as if it were an attainment of skill, and which he dare not call his own. At such times poetry aims at something more than to decorate life; it is spoken of as if it possessed some imperial authority, a power to bind and to loose, to sway man's total nature, to calm, to regulate and restrain, and also to free, to arouse, to dilate the spirit — power not to titillate a particular sense, but to discipline the will and mould a character. In such a tone of high assumption Spenser speaks of poetry. About this time he heard much of experiments in new and ingenious forms of English verse. Sidney and Dyer, Drant and Gabriel Harvey, were full of a scheme for introducing classical metres into our poetry, and Spenser was for a while taken by the scheme. He could not at such a time, he did not ever, despise the craftsman's part of poetry; yet while he thinks of poetry as an art, in the same moment it appears to him to be "no art, but a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by labour and learning, but adorned with both; and poured into the wit by a certain Ἐνθουσιασμός and celestial inspiration." When

in the eclogue the needy poet complains that Apollo is a poor paymaster, Piers replies in the spirit of Sidney when he maintains that the highest end of literature is to instruct and incite men to virtuous action :—

> "Cuddie, the prayse is better than the price,
> The glory eke much greater than the gayne ;
> O ! what an honor is it to restraine
> The lust of lawless youth with good advice,
> Or pricke them forth with pleasaunce of thy vaine,
> Whereto thou list their trayned wills entice.
>
> "Soon as thou gynst to set thy notes in frame,
> O, how the rurall routes to thee doe cleave !
> Seemeth thou dost their soule of sense bereave ;
> All as the shepheard that did fetch his dame
> From Plutoes balefull bowre withouten leave,
> His musicks might the hellish hound did tame."

From the eclogue which contains this pronouncement as to the end of poetry, it appears that Spenser already was meditating verse of a loftier kind, and was even now aware that he should before long change his "oaten reeds" for trumpets :—

> "Abandon, then, the base and viler clowne ;
> Lift up thy selfe out of the lowly dust,
> And sing of bloody Mars, of wars, of giusts ;
> Turne thee to those that weld the awful crowne,
> To doubted knights, whose woundlesse armour rusts,
> And helmes unbruzed wexen daily browne."

The "Faery Queen" is here almost promised. Was this to be a mere romance of adventures, like Ariosto's "Orlando," but unsupported by the wit and worldly wisdom of an Ariosto? Or did Spenser conceive his great poem as something more than a play of fancy? did he conceive it as capable of winning that praise

which he declares in the "Shepherd's Calendar" to be the true glory of art?

The "Shepherd's Calendar" was dedicated

> "To him who is the president
> Of Noblesse and of chevalree,"

to Philip Sidney, "the noble and virtuous Gentleman, most worthy of all titles both of learning and chevalrie." It was possibly on the enforcement of Sidney that Spenser undertook his task "to sing of knights and ladies gentle deeds." Now, although we have to regret the loss of the work entitled "The English Poet," in which Spenser treated of his own art, there remains to us the admirable essay by Sidney written in defence of poetry against the well-meant but ill-considered attack of the playwright-turned-precisian, Stephen Gosson. The delight and pride of the Queen, the court, and indeed of all cultivated England, in Sidney, the deep and universal sorrow for his early death, can be accounted for only by some extraordinary personal noblenesses over and above those which dignify the passionate story of the "Astrophel and Stella," and redeem from mannered sentimentality the endless pages of the "Arcadia." Sidney, the radiant "Hesper-Phosphor" of the time of Elizabeth, fades in the brightness of that great morning, yet no radiance that follows is quite so clear and keen. He charmed by a sweet youthful gravity underlying a sweet youthful joyousness of nature. To Spenser doubtless he appeared to be the realized ideal of what Spenser admired more than any other earthly thing—the chivalric English gentleman. Sidney belonged to both the great movements of his century, and

he felt them to be in harmony one with the other. He belonged heartily to the Reformation; he had the courage to appear prominently as an opponent of the French marriage; he translated Philip of Mornay's treatise on the "Trueness of the Christian Religion." He belonged heartily to the Renaissance, introducing into our prose literature the chivalric-pastoral romance, and engaging eagerly in the reform of versification and in the criticism of poetry. "The Muses met him," says Matthew Roydon, "every day upon Mount Parthenie," and taught him to say and sing; there was in his face, says the same writer, "the lineaments of Gospel books." Sidney could perceive no feud between culture and religion, between the genius of art and the moral temper, between the Muses on "Mount Parthenie" and the Christian Evangelists.

In Sidney's reply to Gosson's attack on poetry he inquires what is the end or object of the life of man, and he answers—as Aristotle had answered in the "Nicomachean Ethics"—it is virtuous action. He compares, with reference to their tendency to lead men to an active virtue, three branches of human learning—philosophy, history, poetry; and his contention is that to poetry must be assigned the highest place. Philosophy enlightens the intellect, but does not move the will; it is weak in its influence on conduct because it deals too exclusively with abstract truth; it lays down the rule, but omits to give the example. History fails for an opposite reason: it deals too exclusively with concrete fact; it gives the example, but the example unilluminated by its principle. Poetry excels them

both, giving as it does neither precept apart from example, nor the example apart from the precept or principle, but both together; and thus it not only enlightens the intellect, but vivifies the emotions and moves the will.

In the spirit of Sidney's "Apologie for Poetry," Spenser conceived and wrote the "Faery Queen." It is an attempt to harmonise the three divisions of learning considered by Sidney—history, moral philosophy, poetry; and to make the first and second of these subserve the greatest of the three. The end of the whole is virtuous action; Spenser would set forth an ideal of human character, and incite men to its attainment. He thought of his poem, while never ceasing to be a true poem, as if it were, in a certain sense, a study in ethics. One day Spenser's friend Bryskett, in his cottage near Dublin, gathered about him a circle of distinguished acquaintances; and conversing on the subject of ethics, which he wished were worthily handled in English, "whereby our youth might speedily enter into the right course of vertuous life," he turned to Spenser with an embarrassing request—that Spenser should forthwith proceed to deliver a discourse on the virtues and vices, and give the company a taste of true moral philosophy. Spenser naturally excused himself, and pleaded on his own behalf that, though he could not improvise a lecture on ethics, he had actually in hand a work which might in some sort satisfy his friend's desire: "For sure I am, that it is not unknowne unto you, that I have already undertaken a work tending to the same effect, which is in heroical verse under the title of a 'Faerie Queene' to

represent all the moral vertues, assigning to every vertue a Knight to be the patron and defender of the same, in whose actions and feats of arms and chivalry the operations of that vertue, whereof he is the protector, are to be expressed, and the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves against the same, to be beaten down and overcome."

"A poet at that time," says the Dean of St Paul's, commenting on this passage, "still had to justify his employment by presenting himself in the character of a professed teacher of morality." But this is hardly in accordance with the facts. It was not as a professed teacher of morality that Chaucer had told his "Canterbury Tales;" it was not as a professed teacher of morality that Marlowe wrote his "Hero and Leander," or Shakspere his "Venus and Adonis." "Every great poet," said Wordsworth, "is a teacher: I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing." May it not be that Spenser had higher thoughts than of justifying his employment? may not he, like Wordsworth, but unlike Chaucer and Marlowe, have really aimed at edification—such edification as is proper to a poet? "You have given me praise," Wordsworth wrote to John Wilson, "for having reflected faithfully in my poems the feelings of human nature. I would fain hope that I have done so. But a great poet ought to do more than this: he ought, to a certain degree, to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent; in short, more consonant to nature and the great moving spirit of things." To render men's feelings more sane,

pure, and permanent—this surely was included in the great design of the "Faery Queen;" it was deliberately kept before him as an object by Spenser—"our sage and serious Spenser, whom I dare to name a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas."

How, then, should we read the "Faery Queen"? Is it poetry? or is it philosophy? Are we merely to gaze on with wide-eyed expectancy as at a marvellous pageant or procession, in which knights and ladies, Saracens and wizards, anticks and wild men, pass before our eyes? or are these visible shows only a rind or shell, which we must break or strip away in order to get at that hidden wisdom which feeds the spirit? Neither of these things are we to do. The mere visible shows of Spenser's poem are indeed goodly enough to beguile a summer's day in some old wood, and to hold us from morning to evening in a waking dream. The ethical teaching of Spenser extracted from his poetry is worthy a careful study. Raphael drew his fainting Virgin Mother as a skeleton in his preparatory study, and the student of Raphael may well consider the anatomy of the figure, because whatever an artist has put into his work, that a critic may try to take out of it. So the moral philosophy of Spenser even apart from his poetry may rightly form a subject of study. But the special virtue of the "Faery Queen" will be found only by one who receives it neither as pageantry nor as philosophy, but in the way in which Spenser meant that it should be received—as a living creature of the imagination, a spirit incarnate, "one altogether," "of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

There are, indeed, portions of the "Faery Queen" which are not vital—which are, so to speak, excrementitious. In a short poem—the expression of a moment of lyrical excitement—a single line, a single word which is not vital, destroys the integrity of the piece. But a poem which has taken into itself the writer's entire mind during long years cannot but be like a wide landscape that includes level with rise, and sandy patches with verdurous tracts. It seems inevitable that in such comprehensive works as the "Divine Comedy," the "Paradise Lost," the two parts of "Faust," the "Faery Queen," the stream of pure imagination should sometimes well out of rocky masses of intellectual argument or didactic meditation. The dullest portions of Spenser's poem are those in which he works with most self-consciousness, piecing together definite meanings to definite symbols; where his love of beauty slumbers and his spirit of ingenuity awakes; where his ideas do not play and part and gather themselves together and deploy themselves abroad, like the shifting and shredding of clouds blown by soft upper airs, but are rather cut out with hard edges by some process of mechanism. When in the "Legende of Temperance" the poet allegorises Aristotle's doctrine that virtue is a mean betwixt the extremes of excess and of defect, our distaste for Elissa and Perissa would surely content the moralist, were it not that our feeling towards their virtuous sister is hardly less unfriendly. From the "Castle of Alma" we should not be ill-pleased if the master-cook, Concoction, and the kitchen-clerk, Digestion, were themselves ignobly conveyed away (if allegory would permit such a departure) by that nether gate, the Port Esquiline.

These lapses and declensions we may pardon and forget. Upon the whole the "Faery Queen," if nothing else, is at least a labyrinth of beauty, a forest of old romance in which it is possible to lose oneself more irrecoverably amid the tangled luxury of loveliness than elsewhere in English poetry. Spenser's delight in the beauty of external nature is often of a high-wrought and elaborated kind, and yet no poet has written a line of more faultless simplicity than that which tells how Calepine when recovered from his wound goes forth "to take the air and hear the thrush's song." But Spenser's rare sensibility to beauty would have found itself ill content if he had merely solitudes of nature, however fair, to contemplate. In his perfect joy in the presence of human beauty he is thoroughly a man of the Renaissance. The visions which he creates of man and woman cast a spell over their creator; they subdue and they exalt him; he cannot withdraw his gaze from the creatures of his imagination; he must satiate his senses with their loveliness; all his being is thrilled with a pure ecstasy as he continues to gaze. And what form of human beauty is there to which Spenser does not pay a poet's homage? Is it infancy? There is the babe rescued by Calepine from the bear's jaws. Spenser speaks of it as the knight's "lovely little spoil." Calepine takes it up in his two arms, and can hardly endure to hear its gentle moaning; he wipes away its tears, and cleanses its face, and searches every little limb, and every part under the swathe-bands, to be assured that the tender flesh is unhurt. Is it old age? There is that goodly sire who, blind himself, granted to Saint

George a prospect of the New Jerusalem from his delectable mountain; keen of inward vision is the old man, though his earthly eyes are dim; he is bright in his extreme age with a visionary glory:

> "With snowy locks adown his shoulders shed;
> As hoary frost with spangles doth attire
> The mossy branches of an oak half dead."

Is it manhood in all the superb vitality and grandeur of early adult years? There is Arthur as first seen by Una, riding towards her in resplendent armour, or Artegall as shown in the magic globe of glass to Britomart:

> "Eftsoones there was presented to her eye
> A comely knight, all armed in complete wise,
> Through whose bright ventayle, lifted up on high,
> His manly face that did his foes agrise,
> And friends to terms of gentle truce entice,
> Lookt forth, as Phœbus face out of the East
> Betwixt two shady mountains doth arise,
> Portly his person was and much increast
> Through his heroic grace and honourable gest."

Or, if we look for a more youthful type of manly strength and grace, there is Calidore, knightliest of shepherds and milkmen, devoted to the service of Pastorella, Spenser's "shepherdess queen of curds and cream," his bright arms exchanged for a rustic weed, and his spear for a shepherd's hook:—

> "So being clad, into the fields he went
> With the faire Pastorella every day,
> And kept her sheepe with diligent attent,
> Watching to drive the ravenous wolfe away,
> The whylest at pleasure she mote sport and play;
> And every evening helping them to fold;
> And otherwhiles for need he did assay
> In his strong hand their rugged teats to hold,
> And out of them to presse the milke: Love so much could."

But more than any other form of beauty that of womanhood charms Spenser, renders his imagination (to use a favourite word of his own) "empassioned," or calms and completely satisfies it. There is Una, with face sad under her wimpled veil, yet, however sad, luminous like an angel's, and making, when stole and fillet have been laid aside, "a sunshine in the shady place." There is Belphœbe, no lily but a rose of chastity, the ideal of virginal freedom, vigour, health, and hardihood, her face clear as the sky, with the glow in it of the quickened blood, her eyes two living lamps, her broad ivory forehead a table for love to engrave his triumphs on, her voice resonant like silver, her moving fleet and firm, a boar-spear in her hand, her brown hair the lovelier for flowers and leaves of the forest which she has borne away in her speed. There is Britomart, of sterner virginal force, yet made for the love of Artegall, tall and large of limb, a martial maid. Let us remember Britomart as she appears when, roused from quiet sleep by the treachery of Malecasta,—now standing for a moment in snow-white smock, with locks unbound, her advanced sword in her hand, and now flying with the flame of wronged and insulted maidenhood in her heart at the dastard knights who would do her shame. And there is Amoret, the type of perfect womanhood, as Belphœbe is of maidenhood; Amoret, brought up by Psyche in the garden of Adonis,—

> "To be the ensample of true love alone
> And loadstar of all chaste affection;"

Amoret, the most tried and true of wives, whom I like best to remember as pictured in the first form of the

legend, rescued from the snares and tortures of the enchanter Busirane, and now lost in the happy secrecy of one long embrace:

> "Lightly he clipt her in his armès twaine,
> And straitly did embrace her body bright,
> Her body, late the prison of sad pain,
> Now the sweet lodge of love and dear delight.
> But the fair lady, overcomen quite
> Of huge affection, did in pleasure melt,
> And in sweet ravishment poured forth her spright,
> No word they spake, nor earthly thing they felt,
> But like two senseless stocks in long embracements melt."

And there is Florimell, who seems like the spirit of some inland stream, but irresistibly drawn seaward by her bold lover, Marinell. And there is Serena, scarcely seen in her loveliness by the light of stars, unclothed upon the woodland altar and prepared for death. And there is Calidore's shepherdess maiden gathering strawberries in the greenwood — a sister of Shakspere's Perdita. And there is Charissa, the fruitful mother, hung upon by her multitude of babes. And there is Dame Celia, the reverend lady of the "House of Holiness," who bows over Una, and embraces her with the protectiveness of age and experience towards youth. And there is Spenser's own Elizabeth, whom Sir Calidore espies encircled by the Graces, and danced around by the hundred naked maidens, lily white.

Now, this sensibility to beauty—the beauty of earth and sky, the beauty of man and woman—does it bring with it any peculiar dangers, any temptations and seductions? Every noble sensibility, every high faculty of man, it may be answered, brings with it some peculiar

danger. Spenser certainly was conscious of risks attending this sensibility to beauty. Puritanism was also aware of these risks; and Puritanism, when it had attained to full strength, said, "Lest thy right eye offend thee straightway pluck it out." Spenser said, "See that it offend thee not." Ascetic in the best sense of that word Spenser assuredly was: he desired to strengthen every part of our nature by heroic discipline, and to subordinate the lower parts to the higher, so that, if strong, they might be strong for service, not for mastery. But Spenser was almost as free as Wordsworth from asceticism in its evil sense, and for the same reason as Wordsworth. To Spenser and to Wordsworth it could not seem desirable to put out the right eye, because to both the eye was an inlet of divine things for the uses of the spirit. With respect to beauty, Spenser's teaching is that true beauty is always sacred, always ennobling to the spirit which is itself sane and pure, but the sensual mind will put even beauty to sensual uses. And he declares further that there is a forged or feigned beauty, which is no more than a fair illusion covering inward foulness and shame. The true beauty, according to Spenser, may be recognised by a certain illuminating quality: it is not mere pasture for the eye; rather it smites the gazer, long accustomed to the dimness of common things, as if with sudden and exquisite light; it is indeed a ray derived from God, the central Luminary of the universe.

But neither the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, nor Platonic conceptions of love and beauty, serve best to protect and deliver us from the temptations of sense as

set forth in Spenser's poetry. By his enthusiasm on behalf of the noblest moral qualities, by his strenuous joy in presence of the noblest human creatures—man and woman—Spenser breathes into us a breath of life, which has an antiseptic power, which kills the germs of disease, and is antagonistic to the relaxed fibre, the lethargy, the dissolution, or disintegrating life-in-death of sensuality. Any heroism of man or woman is like wine to gladden Spenser's heart; we see through the verse how it quickens the motion of his blood. A swift clear flame of sympathy, like an answering beacon lit upon the high places of his soul, leaps up in response to the beacon-fire of chivalric virtue in another soul, even though it be an imagined one, summoning his own. The enchantress Acrasia in her rosy bower is so bewitchingly fair and soft that it goes hard with us to see her garden defaced and herself rudely taken captive. Or it would go hard with us did we not know the faithfulness and soft invincibility of Amoret, the virgin joy and vigour of Belphœbe, the steadfastness and animating trust in Una's eyes,—or had we not beheld the face of Britomart shining beneath her umbriere like daydawn to a belated wanderer, and then all that is vain and false and sensual becomes to us what those ignoble knights of Malecasta were to the warrior virgin,—no more than shadows:

> "All were faire knights and goodly well beseene,
> But to faire Britomart they all but shadows beene."

We have no need to inspect the rout of monsters degraded from manhood by Acrasia's witchcraft. Britomart has clean delivered us from Acrasia.

And so we are brought back to the statement that the high distinction of Spenser's poetry is to be found in the rare degree in which it unites sense and soul, moral seriousness and the Renaissance appetite for beauty. Herein lay his chief lesson for men of his own time. To incite and to conduct men to an active virtue is not only the express purpose of the "Faery Queen," but as far as a poem can render such service, the "Faery Queen" doubtless has actually served to train knights of holiness, knights of temperance, knights of courtesy. Spenser, although an ardent patriot of the time of Elizabeth, or rather because he was an ardent patriot, did not flatter his own age. He believed that the world had declined from its high estate, and fearing that things might tend to worse, he observed anxiously the wrong-doings of the time. He speaks very plainly in "Mother Hubberd's Tale" of vices in the court, the church, the army. He desired to serve his country and his age, as other great Englishmen were doing, and yet in his own proper way. Now, Spenser expected little—perhaps even less than Shakspere—from the people; the doctrine of equality he held, as Shakspere also held, to be a dangerous and misleading cry of demagogues; Spenser expressly argues against that idea in his "Legend of Justice." Liberty he held to consist in obedience to highest law; that people, he thought, is wise and happy which follows its appointed leaders. What Spenser's political faith would be, if he were now living, we may surmise, but cannot assert. Living in the age of great monarchies, he was monarchical and aristocratic. He admired heroic persons, and he found some of

these among the gentle and noble folk of England. He had known Sidney; he served under Lord Grey. When he conceived and planned this vast poem, of which only six out of the twenty-four contemplated books were written, it was with a design which doubtless seemed to Spenser the best suited and the most needful to his own time; his end, as he declared to Raleigh, was "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline." He desired to see at the head of affairs in England a company of noble Englishmen serving for no selfish ends, but following honour in the highest sense of that word—the "Gloriana" of the "Faery Queen."

Thus, with all its opulence of colour and melody, with all its imagery of delight, the "Faery Queen" has primarily a moral or spiritual intention. While Spenser sees the abundant beauty of the world, and the splendour of man and of the life of man, his vision of human life is grave and even stern. For life he regards as a warfare, a warfare needing all our foresight, strength, and skill. To a certain point Spenser's conception of life may be said to be the Puritan conception; it is certainly the reverse of the Epicurean conception. Nor is the combat between good and evil in Spenser's poem one in which victory is lightly or speedily attainable; the sustaining thought is that victory is possible. There is a well-known painting by Raphael of the Archangel Michael slaying the Dragon; the heavenly avenger descends like a young Apollo, with light yet insupportable advance, and in a moment the evil thing must be abolished. There is a little engraving by Albert Dürer which contrasts strangely with that famous picture. It

represents the moment of St George's victory; the monster, very hideous and ignoble, has bitten the dust and lies impotent. But is the victor elated? He is too weary for much elation, too thankful that the struggle is ended; he rests for a short space, still mounted on his heavy German stallion; we can perceive that other combats await him, and that the battle with evil is a battle that lasts a lifetime. Spenser's conception of the strife with wrong comes nearer to that of Dürer than to that of Raphael.

Among the elements of character which Spenser's ideal noble or gentle person must possess, he places godliness first—the religious spirit; and the religious spirit honoured by Spenser is not cloistered or contemplative; he does, indeed, assign a place to contemplation in the discipline of the soul, but the Knight of the Red-cross is, like other knights, sent forth by his mistress, the inspirer and prompter of honourable deeds, to achieve knightly victory over a monstrous evil. Man in relation to God being first studied, Spenser then proceeds to consider man in relation, so to speak, to himself; and the subject of the second book is temperance, or, as we might say, self-control. "Incontinence in anger," says Aristotle ("Nic. Eth.," Book VII., chap. v.), "is less disgraceful than incontinence in appetite." And Spenser, following Aristotle, deals first with the less depraved form of incontinence. "People are called incontinent," says Aristotle, making a distinction between the scientific and the metaphorical use of the word, "even with respect to honour and gain." Spenser, again following Aristotle, leads his Knight of Temperance into the delve

where Mammon lurks, sunning his treasure, and to Pluto's realm, where Queen Philotime, the patroness of worldly honour, as Gloriana is of divine honour, sits enthroned in glistering splendour. From temptations of the pride of life Sir Guyon passes on to temptations of the lust of the flesh—Phædria, mere wanton frivolity, a bubble on the Idle Lake, leading on to the enchantress Acrasia, subduer of so many stout hearts. With a tragic incident the second book of the "Faery Queen" opens —an incident which presents in all its breadth the moral theme of the legend. After his first error through anger—being angry, as Aristotle would say, with the wrong person (for he is on the point of setting his lance at rest against his fellow-servant St George)—Guyon, accompanied by the Palmer, hears the piercing cries of a woman in distress, and discovers the hapless Amavia lying upon the dead body of her husband, and bleeding to death from the stroke of her own hand. It is all the work of Acrasia. Mordant, the dead knight, had been the victim of her sensual snares; through his wife's devotion he had been delivered from them, and restored to his better self; but the witch had pronounced a spell:—

> "Sad Verse, give death to him that death does give,
> And losse of love to her that loves to live,
> So soone as Bacchus with the Nymphe does linck."

Coming to a well, Mordant stooped and drank; the charm found its fulfilment, and of a sudden he sank down to die. "Probably," says the ingenious Boyd, "by the mortal sentence being executed 'when Bacchus with the Nymph does link,' may be meant one very

common effect of intemperance, viz., dropsical complaints." O foolish commentator and slow of heart, has not Spenser himself explained that this is no mere stream of water, but a metamorphosed virgin, who, flying from the lust of Faunus, was changed by Diana into a fountain? Mordant, although he has escaped from the garden of Acrasia, still bears the sinful taint in his veins, and he is slain by the sudden shock of purity. So awful is innocence; so sure to work out their mischief, soon or late, are Acrasia's spells. Mordant, the strong man, lies a ruin of manhood because he could not resist pleasure; his gentle wife perishes because she cannot with womanly fortitude endure pain. Both are the victims of intemperance; both die because they lack that self-control which forms the subject of the entire legend:

> "The strong through pleasure soonest falles, the weake through smart."

Guyon, with such piteous examples in view, must learn to resist alike the temptations of pleasure and of pain.

From a man's relation to God (Book I.) and a man's relation to himself (Book II.), the poem passes to his relations to his fellows. Chief among these is that between the sexes, the law of which is chastity. The representative of that virtue, the Knight of Chastity, is rightly a woman, and the name Britomart is chosen partly because this was a Cretan name for Diana. But by chastity Spenser means no cloistered virtue, and this Diana is the lover of Artegall. There is no chastity, Spenser would assure us, so incapable of stain

as the heroic love of a magnanimous woman. Next follows the love of man for man—friendship. "Friendship," says Aristotle, "is the bond that holds states together, and lawgivers are even more eager to secure it than justice." Spenser accordingly gives friendship the precedence of the sterner virtue. We love one another, says Aristotle, either because we are useful to one another; or because we provide pleasure each for the other; or, finally, because "we wish well to one another as good men." "The perfect kind of friendship is that of good men who resemble one another in virtue" ("Nic. Eth.," Book VIII., chap. iii., sec. 6). Spenser makes Aristotle's distinctions his own. Sir Blandamour and Paridell lay aside their wrath, and are accorded as friends for sake of mutual aid against the rival claimants of the false Florimell; it is an example of Aristotle's "accidental" friendship, founded on motives of utility; under it, says Spenser, lay hidden hate and hollow guile; nor can such friendship last long,—

> "For virtue is the band that bindeth hearts most sure."

The second kind of friendship described by Aristotle —that founded on motives of pleasure—is of a higher nature; yet even this is not the ideal friendship. Scudamour finds in the gardens of the Temple of Venus "thousand payres of lovers" (that is, of friends), who walk

> "Praysing their God, and yeelding him great thankes,
> Ne ever ought but of their true loves talkt,
> Ne ever for rebuke or blame of any balkt.
>
> All these together by themselves did sport
> Their spotless pleasures and sweet loves content.

> But, farre away from these, another sort
> Of lovers linckèd in true harts consent;
> Which lovèd not as these, for like intent,
> But on chaste vertue grounded their desire,
> Far from all fraud or faynèd blandishment,
> Which in their spirits kindling zealous fire,
> Brave thoughts and noble deeds did evermore aspire."

It was the fashion of Spenser's time to do high honour to friendship. But doubtless one reason why he assigns it so important a place in his poem was that he had himself known the worth of friendship and tasted its delight. In one of the few letters of his which are extant, he writes, when about, as he supposed, to leave England for the Continent: "With you I end my last Farewell, not thinking any more to write unto you before I go; and withal committing to your faithful credence the eternal memorie of our everlasting friendship, the inviolable memorie of our unspotted friendship, the sacred memorie of our vowed friendship." Having assigned its place to love, Spenser proceeds to determine the sphere and exhibit the action of justice. The sternness of Spenser in this fifth Book is remarkable. It may be a difficulty with some readers to bring into harmony with their conception of Spenser his emphatic approval of the terrible policy of Lord Grey, the hero of this book, towards the Irish people. Spenser was no dreamer; his "View of the State of Ireland" is full of precise information and practical suggestion. But towards the Irish people Spenser felt as an old Anglo-Indian might feel towards Sepoys in time of mutiny. Last of the existing Books of the "Faery Queen" is the legend of the courteous knight, Sir Calidore. And

Spenser's chief thought on this subject is that true courtesy is not an accomplishment or an acquirement, but grows out of character, and is indeed the delicate flowering of a beautiful nature.

All these virtues are summed up in the one central virtue of High-mindedness (μεγαλοψυχία), or, as Spenser names it, Magnificence. "Indeed, greatness in every virtue or excellence," says Aristotle, "would seem to be necessarily implied in being a high-souled or great-souled man." But there is one thing, Aristotle goes on, about which the high-souled man is especially concerned: "For desert has reference to external good things. Now, the greatest of external good things we may assume to be that which we render to the gods as their due, and that which people in high stations most desire, and which is the prize appointed for the noblest deeds. But the thing which answers to this description is honour, which, we may safely say, is the greatest of all external goods. Honours and dishonours, therefore, are the field in which the high-minded man behaves as he ought." And again: "High-mindedness, as we have said, has to do with honour on a large scale." Or, as Spenser puts it, Prince Arthur, his ideal of "Magnificence," is the lover of Gloriana.

Spenser's conception of life was Puritan in its seriousness; yet we think with wonder of the wide space that lies between the "Faery Queen" and our other great allegory, the "Pilgrim's Progress." To escape from the City of Destruction and to reach the Celestial City is Christian's one concern; all his recompense for the

countless trials of the way lies upon the other side of the river of death. His consuming thought is this: "What must I do to be saved?" Spenser is spiritual, but he is also mundane; he thinks of the uses of noble human creatures to this world in which we move. His general end in the poem is "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." "A grand self-culture," I have elsewhere said, "is that about which Spenser is concerned; not, as with Bunyan, the escape of the soul to heaven; not the attainment of supernatural grace through a point of mystical contact, like the vision which was granted to the virgin knight, Galahad, in the mediæval allegory. Self-culture, the formation of a complete character for the uses of earth, and afterwards, if need be, for the uses of heaven,—this was subject sufficient for the twenty-four books designed to form the epic of the age of Elizabeth. And the means of that self-culture are of an active kind—namely, warfare,—warfare, not for its own sake, but for the generous accomplishment of unselfish ends." Bunyan, with whom the visionary power was often involuntary, who would live for a day and a night in some metaphor that had attacked his imagination, transcribed into allegory his own wonderful experience of terrors and of comfort. Spenser is more impersonal: he can refashion Aristotle in a dream. But behind him lies all the sentiment of Christian chivalry, and around him all the life of Elizabethan England; and from these diverse elements arises a rich and manifold creation, which, if it lacks the personal, spiritual passion of Bunyan's allegory, compensates by its moral breadth, its noble sanity, its conciliation of what is earthly and what is divine.

"A better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas." We have seen to some small extent what Spenser sought to impress upon the mind of his own age. He strove, in his own way as poet, to make the national life of England a great unity,—spiritual, yet not disdaining earth or the things of earth. He strove, as far as in him lay, to breed a race of high-souled English gentlemen, who should have none of the meanness of the libertine, none of the meanness of the precisian. But the contending parties of the English nation went their ways—one party to moral licentiousness and political servility, the other to religious intolerance and the coarse extravagances of the sectaries. Each extreme ran its course. And when the Puritan excess and the Cavalier excess had alike exhausted themselves, and England once more recovered a portion of her wisdom and her calm, it had become impossible to revert to the ideals of Spenser. Enthusiasm had been discredited by the sectaries until it had grown to be a byword of reproach. The orgies of the Restoration had served to elevate common decency into something like high virtue. After the Puritan excess and the Cavalier excess, England recovered herself not by moral ardour or imaginative reason, but by good sense, by a prosaic but practical respect for the respectable, and by a utilitarian conviction that honesty is the best policy.

"A better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas." Yet we are told by the Dean of St Paul's, that in giving himself credit for a direct purpose to instruct, Spenser "only conformed to the curiously utilitarian spirit which pervaded the literature of the time." It is the heresy of

modern art that only useless things should be made beautiful. We want beauty only in playthings. In elder days the armour of a knight was as beautiful as sunlight, or as flowers. "In unaffected, unconscious, artistic excellence of invention," says one of our chief living painters,* "approaching more nearly to the strange beauty of nature, especially in vegetation, mediæval armour perhaps surpasses any other effort of human ingenuity." What if Spenser wrought armour for the soul, and, because it was precious and of finest temper, made it fair to look upon? That which gleams as bright as the waters of a sunlit lake is perhaps a breastplate to protect the heart; that which appears pliant as the blades of summer grass may prove at our need to be a sword of steel.

* Mr G. F. Watts.

HEROINES OF SPENSER.

SPENSER'S manner of portraiture differs much from that of Chaucer, whom he names his poetical master. Ambling Canterburyward, with his eyes on the ground, the earlier poet could steal sprightly glances at every member of the cavalcade—glances which took in the tuft of hairs on the Miller's nose, the sparkle of pins in the Friar's tippet, and the smooth forehead and little rosy mouth of Madam Eglantine. We should know the Wife of Bath, if we met her, by the wide-parted teeth, the dulness of hearing, the bold laugh, the liberal tongue; we should expect to see the targelike hat, the scarlet stockings, and the shining shoes. Spenser's gaze dwelt longer on things, in a more passive luxury of sensation or with reverence more devout. His powers of observation are, as it were, dissolved in his sense of beauty, and this again is taken up into his moral idealism and becomes a part of it. To Chaucer a beautiful woman is a beautiful creature of this good earth, and is often nothing more; her beauty suddenly slays the tender heart of her lover, or she makes glad the spirit of man as though with some light, bright wine. She is more blissful to look on than "the new perjonette tree," and softer than the wether's wool; her mouth is sweet as "apples laid in hay or heath"; her body is gent and small as any weasel. For Spenser behind each woman, made to wor-

ship or to love, rises a sacred presence—womanhood itself. Her beauty of face and limb is but a manifestation of the invisible beauty, and this is of one kin with the Divine Wisdom and the Divine Love. In the poet of Edward's reign a gay and familiar side of chivalry is presented, which existed in life and in art and literature along with that chivalry which was the mysticism of human passion. The more modern poet retains of chivalry only what is exalted, serious, and tender. While heartily a man of his own Elizabethan age—a Protestant age, an age of awakening science, of a high mundane spirit—Spenser does not break with the past. He does not, like Cervantes, with remorseful mockery bid farewell to romance and knight-errantry. Don Quixote, dying, begs pardon of his honest squire for perverting his understanding and persuading him to the folly of chivalric adventure; he had been mad, now he is sane, and is once again Alonzo Quixano the Good. For Spenser knightly warfare against evil was still the rule of heroic manhood; the champions of the great Queen must all be knights-errant; there were giant oppressors to overthrow, there were deceivers of men to unmask, there were captive lands and causes to succour; nor could a time ever come when truth and justice, and purity and gentleness, would not be at odds with evil and untamed forces in our own hearts within and in the broad world without.

Spenser retained for the uses of the Renaissance the moral idealism of chivalry, and he renewed and recreated this; for Spenser's chivalry is one which has made acquaintance with the robust energies of his own time,

with the hearty morality of the Reformed faith, and also with the broad and well-based thoughts of the great master of ethical philosophy. What England of the Renaissance needed most, Spenser declared, was noble character in man and woman. The most worshipful and lovely things this earth could show were, in his eyes, a true English gentleman and a true English lady; these, Spenser said, were actually to be found in Elizabethan England. He had known Sidney; he knew Sidney's sister—

> "Urania, sister unto Astrofell,
> In whose brave mind, as in a golden cofer,
> All heavenly gifts and riches locked are."

There were others no less praiseworthy, and among them his own three kinswomen, of whom one afterwards, in majestic old age, seemed to the youthful Milton equal to Latona or the towered Cybele,

> "Mother of a hundred gods."

These Spenser had seen and known. But in Elizabeth's Court he had found also much that repelled him—spurious gentry, aristocratic barbarism, vulgar pleasures, ignoble ambition and ignoble ease, wantonness misnaming itself love, the bark of slander, the bite of envy. He had experienced the anxieties, the disappointments, the humiliations of one who is a seeker for preferment. Then came a time when he could look at these things—both the evil and the good—from a distance, when his imagination could deal with them in its own mode of serene ardour and could shape them to their ideal forms. To have a part in the ragged commonwealth of Ireland

appeared to Spenser to be nothing less than banishment. Ireland was to him a savage soil; yet, for one of his temper, solitude must have been better than the close shouldering of the press; Mulla, rippling below her alders, must have been more musical than the salutings of sycophants; the Irish air, the lights and shadows, the bright veil of rain, the tender luminousness of morning and evening, the grey mountain Mole, must have made up a surrounding for Spenser more open and fresh than the ante-chamber where importunate suitors are bid to wait.

Two qualities of Spenser's genius have made the "Faerie Queene" a poem, and saved it from becoming a frigid moral allegory or a mere masque of the fancy: one was his delight in sensuous beauty, the other his delight in lovely and heroic human character. He was, fortunately, a man of the Renaissance. At whatever period of the world's history Spenser might have been born he would have been born a lover of all that is pleasant and comely to the senses; but had he been a man of the Middle Ages it is possible that his moral earnestness might have set itself to do battle with his senses; for his garlands of flowers he might have given us only some pale lily or a palm; his dreams of fair women might have come to him only as troublous and torturing visions. Had Spenser been of Milton's party in the times of civil war, he, like Milton, must needs have parted with the youthful *allegrezza;* but he could not, like Milton, have found a higher self in such naked moral sublimity as that of the "Samson Agonistes"; defrauded of his love of sensuous beauty, Spenser would have been cut off from one, and that a large, affluent of

his spiritual inspiration. For beauty, Spenser maintained, is twofold. There is beauty which is a mere pasture for the eye; it is a spoil for which we grow greedy; as we gaze on it we sink in waves of deep delight; it leaves us faint with too much luxury of heart. And there is the higher beauty of which the peculiar quality is a penetrating radiance; it illuminates all that comes into its presence; it is a beam from the Divine Fount of Light; it lifts up the soul of man out of the mire of this world; it pierces him with a sacred joy; it animates him to pure and passionate endeavour.

Spenser's moral idealism and his exquisite sense of beauty met, and became inseparably involved. His moral idealism concerned itself not solely or chiefly about abstract qualities, though with these it also had dealings; its most appropriate objects were found in ideal human characters. Had Spenser thought only of qualities, and had he set his imagination to exhibit these in allegory, the "Faerie Queene" would have been one long masquelike procession, as visionary as that which passes before the eyes of Britomart in the enchanter's chamber. And there are many masques and masquelike figures in Spenser's poems; even Despair, and Mammon, and Care, figures so marked by Spenser's peculiar genius, may be classed with these. There are times, again, when his genius wholly deserts him, and we get abstractions bald and bare, or tricked out with some antic garb which is too ill-fitting or too ragged to cover their nakedness. Spenser's most admirable poetical creations, however, are not masquerading qualities, well or ill attired, but ideal characters of man and woman; the moral allegory finds

its play in and through the epic persons. Sir Calidore and Pastorella are as truly a gallant youth and a shepherdess queen of curds and cream as are the charming boy and girl lovers of the "Winter's Tale." When Wordsworth would name two personal themes gained from books, from books around which our happiness may twine with tendrils strong as flesh and blood, he chooses one from the plays of Shakspere—Desdemona—and the second is the Una of Spenser.

Spenser's manner of portraiture seems to be at its best in female figures. "The perfection of woman," said Coleridge, "is to be characterless," meaning that no single prominent quality, however excellent, can equal in beauty and excellence a well-developed, harmonious nature. The creator of Una, and Amoret, and Florimell loved also this harmony of character, and he found it, or believed he found it, more in woman than in man. While each of the heroines of the "Faerie Queene" has distinction, so that Una little resembles Belphœbe and Britomart is far removed from Pastorella, each possesses in her own kind that perfection of womanhood which Coleridge praised and loved. Spenser's great knights strive with outward enemies — giant, or dragon, or Saracen, or enchanter—and sometimes these stand in the allegory for actual external difficulties and dangers; but in many instances we discover presently that they are indeed inward enemies, bosom foes given externality in order to carry on the action of the poem. And so the unity of personal character is broken by the allegory; one piece of a man's nature hypostatised is set over against another; inward division of heart is represented

by a hurtling of champion against champion. But this is not the case with Spenser's women. They are not parcelled out into fragments. To fortune, evil and good, they are exposed—that fortune behind and above which, according to the faith of Spenser, a Divine Providence for ever lives and works—but they do not suffer inward disruption. If Una be made captive to Sansloy, she only endures a hardship at the hands of fate; she remains faithful and true, and needs no chastening, but rather comforting. If the Red Cross Knight be thrown into Orgoglio's dungeon, it signifies that he is a traitor to his better self; holiness has become infected with pride, and the scourge and fasting of Dame Cœlia's house will be needed for his restoration. (Hence while Spenser's knights at times lapse back from persons into qualities, his chief female figures are always the female figures of an epic of romance.) The allegory often does little more with respect to them than determine the leading feature in the character of each, or select the group of women from which each shall be singled as an ideal type. It is true they do not possess the interest given by complex elements of character; but if they are simple they are also complete. They rejoice, they sorrow; fears and hopes play through the life blood in their cheeks; they are tender, indignant, pensive, ardent; they know the pain and the bliss of love; they are wise with the lore of purity, and loyalty, and fortitude. Even in dramatic poetry our interest in character does not depend solely on the number of elements which go to form it. The beauty of perfect poise, of coherence, and of flawless vitality charms us. If it were not so Miranda might

disappear from the "Tempest" and Perdita from the "Winter's Tale." They exhibit none of the iridescent moods of a Cleopatra; they are not waves of the sea, but children of the grave, sweet mother Earth; and the imagination finds as endless a satisfaction in their bright purity and singleness of being as the eye finds in some blossom's radiant life and mystery of unmingled loveliness.

Spenser's landscape is in harmony with his figures, possessing a portion, as it were, of feminine beauty. His Faerie Land is such a country as Gloriana might have created for her own empire. Something is derived here from Italian poetry, in particular from Ariosto, but something also from Spenser's own genius. The elements of his landscape are few; he returns to them often, and dwells upon them with inexhaustible delight. The objects and aspects of external nature which impress us as sublime were to Spenser, as to the other poets of his time, not sublime, but dreadful. The roaring wilderness of waters appals him; he had watched the billows in the Irish sounds charging one another like angry rivals; it was a happiness when his foot touched English earth again. Spenser had found his Rosalind in the North Country—Rosalind "the widow's daughter of the glen." But we cannot imagine Spenser exulting in the barren grandeur of a North Country moor; it was natural that Colin Clout should come south, to lead his flocks among the dales of Kent.* What the poet of

* Does the Celtic word "glen" occur in English poetry before Spenser? His friend E. K., annotating the "Shepheard's Calendar," explains it as "a country hamlet or borough," misunderstanding the word, for Spenser uses it again ("Faerie Queene," b. iii, c. 7, st. 6), where Florimell finds the witch's cottage in a "gloomy glen," certainly not in a "country hamlet or borough."

Faerie Land especially loves are those select spots devised by nature for delight, sacred and secure, where nature, as it were, vies with art, and where men in instinctive gratitude would fain build an altar on the green sward to the mild genius of the place. To such a sylvan retreat the wounded Timias is conveyed by the damsels of Belphœbe. It is a glade environed by mountains and mighty woods, forming an amphitheatre in their midst; a little river plays over its gleaming gravel; in the myrtles and laurels the birds are uttering

> "Many a lovely lay
> Of God's high praise and of their love's sweet teen."

In such a place, or one still fairer, Calidore beheld the hundred naked maidens, lily white, dancing in a circle, and within their circle those three handmaidens of Venus, the Graces; and yet again enclosed and garlanded by their loveliness Spenser's own bride, Elizabeth, set like

> "A precious gem
> Amidst a ring most richly well enchased."

Around are woods of matchless height, and all the trees are trees of honour; a little hill rises from the grassy plain; at the foot a gentle flood tumbles its silver waves, "unmarred with ragged moss or filthy mud," and on the summit is the plain where the dancers dance and Colin pipes. Even in denser forest, though there is danger of violence and lurking foes, all is not horror; the wild wood creatures are not all like those who would sacrifice and devour their beauteous prey, Serena; there are also tribes docile and prone to an untrained fidelity, like

those who, grinning gently, bend the knees backward to Una, or like the salvage man who fawns upon Serena—

> "Kissing her hands and grovelling to the ground,
> For other language had he none, nor speech,
> But a soft murmur and confused sound
> Of senseless love."

The native haunt of evil, as Spenser imagined it, is a cave; there it lurks and shuns the light. Spenser hates darkness and foulness and the close damp of the den; and escape from imprisonment into the sunshine, or from the sick room into the outer world, is felt by him as an exquisite pleasure. Calepine goes forth, when recovered from his wound, "to take the air and hear the thrush's song;" the witch's son escapes with his snow lady from the smoky cottage to pass the idle time "in the open freshness of the gentle air." Creatures who do not love the sun and breeze must needs be very sad or very sinful. In a cave lies coiled the feminine serpent Error; the den is loathsome and in a covert place, where light seems uncouth and the glistering of St George's armour infuses hatred and alarm. In a cave dwells the ragged wretch Despair—

> "Far underneath a craggy clift ypight,
> Dark, doleful, dreary, like a greedy grave."

In a delve hard by the cavernous entrance to hell sits Mammon, sunning his antique treasure. And the much-afflicted Malbecco, goatish old husband to the wanton Hellenore, escaped from his pursuers at last, runs to earth where a buttress of rock hangs dreadfully over the sea; there, under the ever-threatening crag, above the

ever-thundering billow, he creeps into the narrow cave, and, forgetting that he was man, knows himself and is known thenceforward as Jealousy.

In the legend of St George, as accepted by artists of the Middle Ages, the virgin Cleodolinda, the Andromeda of Christian mythology, is about to die, when the warrior, now riding forward to join his legion, perceives her distress, rescues her, and slays the dragon. Spenser recasts the legend: Una is never exposed to the monster; she devotes herself to the delivery of her parents, and the part which she plays in the adventure is far from being a passive one. To her the champion of her cause owes the sword which fights her battle, and hope, and courage, and forgiveness, and love, and even life itself. Before her arrival he seems but a clownish young man among the splendid personages of Gloriana's court; it is Una who brings him his great charger and the silver shield. Throughout Spenser's poem, although Una is so young, so tender, so mild, while the knight is stout and bold, there is a certain protectiveness on her part towards him; yet this is united in such a way with gentle, fervid loyalty and trust that it seems to imply no consciousness of superiority. St George is not yet delivered from the cloud of youthful ignorance and unpurged passion: in his courage there is something of mere "greedy hardiment;" in his indignation against evil there is too little care to distinguish the innocent from the guilty; in his sorrow for wrong-doing there is some of that lax self-pity which prefers the easy way of despair and death to the hardness of strenuous discipline. But Una has already known the good and evil things of

life. She first recognises the peril of the Wandering Wood, yet the knight being once pledged to encounter with the serpent of the cavern, she would not have him draw back; she is aware that no half-measures will serve in such a struggle with error, and heartens St George to the desperate effort.

> "Now, now, Sir Knight, show what ye be;
> Add faith unto your force, and be not faint;
> Strangle her, else she fain will strangle thee."

And when this first victory has been achieved, the eager approach and joyous greeting of his lady fill the weary knight with new strength, so that she has now to warn him that before new adventure rest is needful, and refreshment, and the wise counsel of the night. As she would utterly destroy the evil creature of the Wandering Wood, so when at length the enchantress Duessa, the deceiver of her lord, is overthrown, Una shows no weakness of false pity. Her lord's feeble cry comes to her from the dungeon when no one else has heard it, and the wrath of Una, pure and innocent as her own lamb, is unflinching as that wrath of the Lamb of which we read elsewhere.

> "Well begun; end all so well, I pray!
> Ne let that wicked woman 'scape away."

Duessa is not slain, but all her loathsomeness of body is laid bare; this Una decrees, and her knight must look upon the withered hag whom he had taken to himself in Una's place; after that let her deceive him if she can. But before St George endures the pain and shame which are needful, Una has already taken him to her heart, with only tears for his piteous aspect, and no

word of reproach except against the evil star which had wronged his truer self.

> "Whom when his lady saw, to him she ran
> With hasty joy: to see him made her glad,
> And sad to view his visage pale and wan,
> Who erst in flowers of freshest youth was clad.
> Then, when her well of tears she wasted had,
> She said, 'Ah, dearest lord, what evil star
> On you hath frowned and poured his influence bad,
> That of yourself ye thus berobbed are
> And this misseeming hue your manly looks doth mar?'"

Yet another subtle and dangerous enemy the young knight meets before his trial of strength with the dragon. The strange fascination which resides in the words of Despair has laid its spell upon his soul; his eye broods on the dull waters of death; his resolution ebbs; he is tending heavily to the grave; the dagger is in his trembling hand. For one moment Una feels the blood run cold to her heart, and she is on the point of swooning; the next she snatches away the accursed knife, with courageous words which strive for the desperate man's sake to be reproachful.

> "Come, come away, frail, feeble, fleshly wight;
> Ne let vain words bewitch thy manly heart."

In Dame Cœlia's house Una is indeed happy. The reverent matron cherishes her; she is as a sister among the three comely daughters; and she knows that joy so dear to a woman's heart of acting as an earthly Providence to her lover, of fashioning him in ways after her mind, and of anticipating in her spiritual child some of the delights of motherhood, while she watches him grow daily in thews and stature, in all the cardinal virtues

and all the Christian graces. His rueful shrieks and groanings come to her when Patience disciplines him with the iron whip, and Una writhes under the torment as if it were her own; but it is wholesome for him to endure, and she bears all wisely and patiently. At last the scourgings, and nippings, and prickings, and smartings are over; St George is brought to her clean and sound, the son of her tears and prayers; he is her very own, and now with sweet complacency she kisses him, praying him to cherish himself and partake once more of gladness.

Una can endure joy as she can sorrow. Her joy is never a blinding bliss of life; it has in it a reasonableness and sweet sobriety. When Arthur overthrows her adversary, the royal maid comes running fast to greet his victory, "with sober gladness and mild modesty." Yet this perfect poise of joy has nothing of languor in it; she sees life steadily and sees it whole, and, therefore, she carries some of the sunshine into shady places, and in her elation there is a touch of sadness. On her betrothal morning Una comes forth as fresh and fair as the freshest flower in May; she is clothed in a robe all lily white, more pure and less proud than silk or silver; her sad wimple is thrown aside, and her face has in it the radiance of the morning; yet at this most wished-for moment Una's gladness is wisely tempered and serious.

> "Then forth he callèd that his daughter fair,
> The fairest Una, his only daughter dear,
> His only daughter and his only heir;
> Who forth proceeding with sad, sober cheer,

As bright as doth the morning star appear
Out of the East, with flaming locks bedight
To tell that dawning day is drawing near,
And to the world does bring long-wished light;
So fair and fresh that lady showed herself in sight."

But joy of any kind, unless it reside in the consciousness of loving duty done, is rare with Una, and, for all her strength of endurance and of affection, she is a frail and tender being, exposed to the roughest buffetings of fortune. By nothing is Spenser so empassioned (to use a word of his own) as by the sight of woman in undeserved distress; the chivalrous fire kindles about his heart; wrath, and remorse, and love make him their own. And Una is for ever passing from calamity to calamity. The brightness of her aspect is that of a face very white and calm; she veils herself and wears the mourning stole in token of her sorrow; when she has laid aside the veil we see the clear shining of her beauty most often through tears. The lion forgets his rage in her presence, but the fealty of her wild champion brings a pang to the lady's heart, for it reminds her of her own lionlike lord, who has fled away from her. Then, after her manner of shunning violences of feeling, she compels herself to be calm, "in close heart shutting up her grief." Once more, when night comes in the miserable cottage of Abessa, her sorrow breaks its bounds, and once more at morning she is ready to resume her labours. The day brings only deception, and wrong, and anguish. Archimago, disguised as her own knight, rides towards her, and Una, in glad yet timid humility, approaches him, and presently taking

heart, dares to greet him with happier welcome. Then comes the discovery of the old enchanter's fraud and bare escape from the violent hands of the Saracen. Among the kindly salvage tribe Una enjoys a short breathing-time, and resting her over-worn heart is yet not idle; she is a teacher to the barbarous people of the gentle lore of Christ. When rescued from the woods, grief begins anew with the false tidings of St George's death; the lady is so downcast that she cannot for sorrow keep pace with her protector, Satyrane. A second escape from the Paynim follows, and a second time assurance reaches her of her lord's death; for is not this the dwarf who hastens towards her bearing the masterless spear and shield? Una sinks from deep swoon to swoon; and then, when her case is almost desperate, the strong comfort reaches her of Prince Arthur's presence, and his reasonable words, which she, putting away her passion of grief, reasonably ponders and receives. Even the joy of her betrothal day is not unmingled with pain; the last guileful shaft of her adversary has still to be shot; with "sober countenance" Una confronts Archimago and unmasks his lie. At last she touches the whole of happiness, touches it and no more; she is made one with him who from the first had been dearer to her than the light of day, and almost at the same time she is divided from him. The Faerie champion must depart to accomplish other commands of Queen Gloriana, and Una is left to mourn.

In all save purity of heart Belphœbe presents a contrast to Una, and even her purity of heart is of a different kind. Una's love towards her chosen knight has

in it something of the nature of celestial grace; all earthly ardour of love is transfigured in the white radiance of her soul—transfigured, but present. Belphœbe's passion is that of virginal joy, and pride, and freedom. She thinks of love for no man and from none, whether to give or to take; it is enough to have victorious play among the woodland beasts, and, Dian-like, to rest in the company of her maidens. In happy hour we first see her, for as she starts suddenly to view from among the green boughs, following hard upon the prelude of her ringing horn, we have almost grown ashamed of manhood in company of the despicable braggart and his squire. She is clad in hunter's weed, and moves a goddess; her face is clear as the sky, not with such luminous pallor as that of Una, but with the flush of health and gallant exercise; a breeze and breath of life, "able to heal the sick and to revive the dead," play around her as they might around some flourishing tree; her eyes beam like two living lamps "under the shadow of her even brows;" her ivory forehead is a broad table for Love to engrave his triumphs on; her lips are incarnadined with the quickened blood; her words make silver music in the air. Una had worn the veil and mourning stole. Belphœbe is clad in white, but her short camis is of silk, starred with gold and with golden fringe; the buskins of her goodly legs are rich with curious anticks and fastened with a jewel. She leads no lamb in a line, but is a pursuer of soft woodland creatures and a queller of the fiercer beasts in her victorious play. In her hand is a boar spear, and at her back are the bow and quiver. A golden baldrick is on her

breast, letting its virginal beauty be divined; the golden hair shed about her shoulders is lightly blown by the breeze, and it shows the lovelier for fresh leaves and blossoms borne away from the forest trees in the speed of her flight. Spenser's imagination pours forth its treasures to enrich with all pure splendours this ideal of glad virginity. Not love, but honour is her aim, and this she seeks where true honour may be found, amid the toils and dangers of a strenuous life.

> "In woods, in waves, in wars, she* wonts to dwell,
> And will be found with peril and with pain;
> Ne can the man that moulds in idle cell
> Unto her happy mansion attain:
> Before her gate high God did sweat ordaine,
> And wakeful watches ever to abide."

Belphœbe, the foster child of Diana, forfeits nothing of her sex. Spenser's masculine women are to be found among his evil women. The poet of Faerie Land would make but a poor figure in a company of modern Radical reformers. His giant who proclaims to an applauding crowd the doctrine of equality is "much admired of fools, women, and boys;" but Talus, that stout squire of Arthegall, patron of justice, shoulders the giant from his rock into the welter of the waves. The amazon Radigund revolts against the law of her sex, establishing the liberty of women; but Britomart in fair field overthrows her, cleaves both head and helmet at one stroke, and she, the heroic warrior-lady, repeals that evil custom and destroys every trace of the feminine usurpation. Spenser's Belphœbe, with all her pride and freedom, is a gentle maiden. Led by the track of blood, she suddenly

* *She, i.e.*, Honour.

comes—expecting a stricken beast—upon the body of Arthur's youthful squire, laid along the ground, his hair, like faded leaves, knotted with blood, his lips below the boyish down showing pale and wan. Belphœbe starts back for a moment in horror;

> "But when she better him beheld she grew
> Full of soft passion and unwonted smart:
> The point of pity pierced through her tender heart."

She bows meekly down, rears his languid neck, chafes his temples, unfastens his hauberk, and lifts the heavy burganet from his head. What wonder that the youth, waking from his swoon with a long sigh, and looking up and seeing her by his side, takes her for some messenger of God, and, with a boy's ardour and the sense of his unworthiness, is fain to kiss her blessed feet? But Belphœbe, no lily, rather the rose of chastity, feels towards him only as towards a fellow-mortal in distress; a return of love she cannot give him, but all courtesy she gives, and kindness "tempered with grace and goodly modesty." And she is not indifferent to his devotion; at least no other woman must be adored by him. Amoret is rescued from the boarlike salvage, who is Spenser's embodiment of lust; Belphœbe chases the monster, and strikes him in the throat with her arrow as he enters his den; returning, she discovers the squire, Timias, leaning over Amoret in a swoon, "that new lovely mate;" he wipes the dew from her eyelids and kisses them, and softly handles every hurt. Belphœbe's cheek flushes and her heart is aflame; it is not jealousy, but "deep disdain and great indignity;" she has almost strung the arrow to slay him—

"Yet held her wrathful hand from vengeance sore;
But drawing nigh, ere he her well beheld,
'Is this the faith?' she said—and said no more,
But turned her face and fled for evermore."

"For evermore," as it seemed to her in her first indignation and to Timias in his first despair; but the dove, his emissary, bearing round its neck her heart-shaped ruby, flits before her head and leads her on till she finds the melancholy wretch, no longer to be recognised with his downfallen hair and meagre face, and hears his complaint, and looks mildly on him once more, and restores him to her favour and to a happiness he will not forfeit by a second indiscretion.*

Belphœbe and Amoret are twin sisters; the story of their birth and fostering is one of Spenser's most graceful inventions. Venus, having lost her little son, seeks for him here and there, in court, and city, and field, and at last among the woods. Diana, with her nymphs, is resting after the chase; to the inquiry of Venus for her boy she returns a scornful answer, but Venus replies mildly, and the angry goddess is appeased. Diana's maidens set forth to seek the little god, and find in a covert not Cupid, but a fair woman lying entranced, who has brought forth painlessly two lovely babes.

"Up they them took, each one a babe uptook,
And with them carried to be fostered:
Dame Phœbe to a nymph her babe betook,
To be upbrought in perfect maidenhed,
And of herself her name Belphœbe red;
But Venus hers thence far away conveyed,
To be upbrought in goodly womanhed;
And in her little love's stead which was strayed
Her Amoretta called, to comfort her dismayed."

* Belphœbe, we know, is Elizabeth; it has been conjectured that Sir Walter Raleigh is the squire.

Amoret, the child of the sun's mystical begetting, is brought to the garden of Adonis, that Paradise where the eternal forms of things reside, and from which our earth is replenished with her various kinds. Here she is committed to the care of Psyche and made companion to Psyche's little daughter, Pleasure. Here she learns the lore of love and "true feminitee," until at length, grown to perfect ripeness, she is presented to the world's view—

> "To be the ensample of true love alone
> And lodestar of all chaste affection."

Spenser's thought seems to have been that, glorious in power, freedom, and beauty as virginity may be, such a state is only for rare natures elected to it, and that the true ideal of womanhood, as such, is only attained through love which leads to wedlock. Amoret, more than any other of his heroines, presents us with Spenser's conception in its purest form of the "ewig Weibliche," the eternal feminine principle, which assumes a myriad different forms and finds its highest embodiment in perfect woman. She is to Spenser what Eve was to Milton, the pure type of her sex, the general mother. Hence when her lover finds Amoret, it is in the Island of Love, and not in the island merely, but in its midst, in Venus's temple, and not in the temple merely, but at the feet of the image of the goddess. To this veiled goddess—veiled not because of shame, but to shadow from profane eyes the mystery of her double sex, both male and female—a troop of lovers chant the great hymn of praise taken from the Roman poet's proemium, the "Alma Venus" of Lucretius. The ecstasy of love in all nature—in

bird, and beast, and the sea, and the dædal earth—is celebrated, and last in human kind.

> "Thou art the root of all that joyous is,
> Great god of men and women, queen o' the air,
> Mother of laughter, and well-spring of bliss."

Encircled by the choir of lovers, and around the feet of the goddess, lie fair damsels—blushing Shamefastness, and Cheerfulness, and Courtesy, and Obedience, and sober Modesty, and soft Silence, and in their midst, of riper years and graver countenance than the rest, is Womanhood, and in the lap of Womanhood is Amoret.

But Amoret, if the cherished child of Love, is also Love's martyr. On her marriage day, while still a virgin wife, she is snatched away from her husband by the enchanter Busirane; she is chained around the slender waist to a pillar in his inner chamber of enchantment, and all magic arts and rare tortures are practised to subdue her constancy. Instead of the lap of Womanhood she has about her sides the harsh hands of Despight and Cruelty; instead of the fair damsels of Venus she has for company those fantastic masquers who pass in procession, some wildly fair, some strange and enigmatical, some fierce and tyrannous, and none true except those who form a sorrowful troop near to that last masquer Death. But Amoret has learnt the preciousness of true love, and joy has finely tempered her soul for the hour of fortitude; and so she endures until deliverance comes with the heroic Britomart. From our present "Faerie Queene" the true ending of this story, as first conceived by Spenser, has disappeared. We feel in reading the later books of the poem that the second

seizure of Amoret—that by the tusked and hairy wild man—is too gross a wrong to be allowed to hurt a life so dear. As Spenser originally wrote and published his third book Amoret is restored to the arms of her husband, who waits sorrowfully outside the enchanted castle, through whose fiery portal Britomart alone can pass. The martyrdom of Amoret should end here; with the meeting of husband and wife, who are also lover and lover, all grief and fear should pass away. And so Spenser had it in the beautiful stanzas which he removed from the poem as continued to the later books. Scudamour, lying forlorn upon the ground, is startled by the voice of Britomart; he looks up, and Amoret stands before him.

"There did he see that most on earth him joyed,
His dearest love, the comfort of his days,
Whose too long absence had him sore annoyed
And wearied his life with dull delays;
Straight he upstarted from the loathed layes
And to her ran with hasty eagerness,
Like as a deer that greedily embayes
In the cool soil after long thirstiness
Which he in chase endurèd hath, now nigh breathless.

Lightly he clipt her in his armës twain,
And straitly did embrace her body bright—
Her body, late the prison of sad pain,
Now the sweet lodge of love and dear delight.
But the fair lady, overcomen quite
Of huge affection, did in pleasure melt
And in sweet ravishment poured out her spright,
No word they spake, nor earthly thing they felt,
But like two senseless stocks in long embracements melt."

The adventures of Florimell are among the most romantic in the "Faerie Queene," but she herself is

chiefly interesting as their subject or their occasion. She is a woman, beautiful, and in distress; this, it seems, should be enough. We know how she is snowy white and chaste as snow; we know how true she is to her sea-sprung lover, Marinell; and we know little more. Were it not that the false snow-lady, who wears her name, is substanceless, and by her unreality makes the true Florimell real, we might think of her as of some vision seen in the curling of great waves upon the strand when the sun shines bright and a land breeze whirls the gleaming spray. Yet we should miss the story of Florimell if removed from Spenser's poem, for it bears us through romantic wood, and wild, and glen, and to the rich seashore, and to the great waters where Proteus drives his scaly herd, and to Proteus's bower under a whelming rock against which the billows for ever roar and rave. And to it belongs the marriage of the Medway and the Thames, with that pompous gathering to the feast of British and Irish rivers. In an epic of the days of Drake and Raleigh we should be ill content unless we grew into acquaintance with Nereus and Neptune, with Panope and Galatea, the nymphs and the gods of sea.

With Britomart it is far otherwise; she does not, like Florimell, remind us of a myth of external nature born of the sea and shore, but is wholly human to the heart. When Spenser would present a patron knight of chastity, he chose a woman; and he made her no vestal vowed to perpetual maidenhood, but the most magnanimous of lovers. That is to say, the highest chastity is no cloistered virtue, but lives in a heart

aflame with pure passion. Such a heart is no cold house swept and garnished; it is rather a sanctuary where a seraph breathes upon the altar coals. Britomart, tall of stature, large of limb, knit strongly for deeds of prowess, follows from childhood upward her appointed way. She is trained to toss the spear and shield, to hunt out perils by sea and land; she cannot endure, like other ladies, "to finger the fine needle and nice thread." There is something at once lovely and awe-inspiring in her aspect. And for a time the great heart is a girl's heart, still a stranger to love. Then on a day she wonders musingly who shall be her husband, knowing that fate has allotted her one. She gazes into her father's enchanted mirror, and in that moment her doom comes upon her: in the mirror is presented a knight all armed; the ventayle of his helmet is lifted up; his face, stern yet gracious, looks forth

> "As Phœbus' face out of the east
> Betwixt two shady mountains doth arise."

It is the one face in the world which can subdue Britomart. To Una love had come as a blessedness in giving, a comfort in receiving; to Amoret it had come as a joy fulfilling her life; it comes to Britomart imperiously, tyrannously, laying a burden on her which with all her strength she is hardly able to bear. Her spirits droop during the daytime, and at night, when she lies down by the side of old Glauce, sleep deserts her, her heart beats hard against her side, she cannot check the heavy sighs that come to ease her breast loaded with a mountainous pain.

> "For me no usual fire, no usual rage
> It is, O nurse, which on my life doth feed."

When the old woman has heard the trouble, glad that it is no worse than honest love, she leans on her weak elbow and kisses softly her child's bosom, feeling how it pants and quakes "as it an earthquake were." Cherished and faintly cheered by Glauce's words, at last a little creeping sleep surprises Britomart; but at morning the pain returns, and neither prayers nor herbs can bring relief. And so they go for advice to learned Merlin, the nurse, with old wives' cunning, having first disguised her foster child. But the mage, who has been frowning over his necromantic book, looks up and laughs aloud; the royal maiden cannot be so concealed from his recognition, and Britomart, blushing instantly to a clear carnation, reads upon his lips her destiny. A glorious destiny it is, for kings and mighty emperors are to be her offspring. Thus heartened, she begins anew her life of enterprise—arrays her limbs in the armour of Angela, the Saxon queen, all fretted round with gold, which hangs in the church of King Ryence, and so sets forth on adventure under the conduct of Love.

As Amoret, most faithful of wives, was Love's martyr, so Britomart, the patron of chastity, is Love's champion. Outside the Castle Joyous—unworthily so named—a single knight is fiercely assailed by six dastard antagonists. Britomart hastens to the rescue, and having with half a score of strokes dispersed the crew, she mildly inquires the cause of their dissension. It is the custom of the castle to require that each passer shall forsake his own lady and devote himself to its Lady of

Delight. The indignation of Britomart flames at the thought of love constrained, and turning from one to another of the ignoble knights she overthrows and subdues them. Presently St George—for he was the distressed combatant—and his deliverer are in the presence of the wanton lady Malecasta, who receives them sitting on a sumptuous bed. The knight is straightway disarmed;

> "But the brave maid would not disarmed be,
> But only vented up her umbriere,
> And so did let her goodly visage to appear."

The face behind its shadowing armour shines as the moon does when breaking through a cloud and discovering her bright head to the discomfited world. This incident of Britomart's beauty of womanhood beaming or flashing forth before men's eyes from its dark coverture is dwelt on by Spenser's imagination with a peculiar fondness, and he repeats it, varying the circumstances, not fewer than three times. Again at Malbecco's inhospitable house, to which the knights have forced an entrance, seeking shelter from the darkness, storm, and rain, when they dry themselves before the blazing fire, Britomart too must be disarrayed—

> "Tho', whenas vailed was her lofty crest,
> Her golden locks, that were in trammels gay
> Upbounden, did themselves adown display,
> And raught unto her heels, like sunny beams
> That in a cloud their light did sometime stay,
> Their vapour vaded, show their golden gleams
> And through the persant air shoot forth their azure streams."

She puts off her heavy habergeon, and lets her frock,

tucked short about her as she rode, flow to her foot with "careless modesty." And so disarrayed she seems no other than Bellona returned from the slaughter of the giants, with helmet loosed and untying from the arm her gorgonian shield. In like manner in the castle to which she conducts Amoret, and before which she has jousted with the young knight, when the brave youth would be thrust out because he has no love nor lady, Britomart, his overthrower in arms, with majestic courtesy undoes her helmet to disclose her sex and claim him for her knight. Her falling shower of hair is like the play of summer lightning in the heavens. The youth pours forth his thanks and worships the great lady in his heart.

In Malecasta's abode of false delight the knights whom she has subdued, careless livers in the lap of pleasure, are to Britomart no more than shadows; she heeds them not. But Malecasta, stricken with love for the supposed male warrior whose face has shone beneath the umbriere, claims some pity from Britomart; for has she not herself known the imperious force of love? And so, when the hour for sleep had come, with kindly thoughts

> "She 'gan herself despoile
> And safe commit to her soft feathered nest."

But at night, turning wearily, she wakes to find the wanton dame couched by her side; she rises in wrath; a cry from the terrified Malecasta rings through the house; the six knights come running hastily to their lady's help; she lies swooning on the ground. We shall not do Britomart's heroic beauty wrong if we

remember her as she appeared at that moment, standing in snow-white smock, with unbound locks, fierce in her maidenhood, "threatening the point of her avenging blade." Love's champion must needs be a terrible justicer to all who wrong love. So she is found to be by Busirane. With her ample shield thrown before her and the advanced sword in her hand, she has passed the fire of his enchanted portal; she has waited impatiently in the chamber of arras and read the strange inscription over each door; then of a sudden the marvel of the masque goes by, and Britomart gazes on, and of a sudden it is ended. But when the same things repeat themselves next day she knows the deed to do and is swift and sure: she springs into the inner chamber, she plucks from the wizard's hand the knife which was meant to pierce the tender side of Amoret, she smites him to the ground, and when he has risen, sullen but subdued, and is reading backward his mighty spells, all the while Britonart stands by him with outstretched sword held high above his head.

Spenser's last introduction of the incident of the helmeted face is when the lovers are made acquainted with each other. Britomart has overthrown Arthegall in the tourney, unwitting that it was he, knowing him only as the Salvage Knight. Shortly after, as Scudamour and Arthegall ride in company, they espy the winner at the tourney. Scudamour rides against the stranger and is unhorsed. A like mischance befalls Arthegall, and thereupon begins a furious combat on foot. At length one hideous stroke lights upon her helmet; she stands unharmed, but her ventayle is shorn away.

"With that her angel's face, unseene afore,
Like to the ruddy morn appeared in sight,
Dewed with silver drops through sweating sore,
But somewhat redder than beseemed aright
Through toilsome heat and labour of her weary fight."

Around this "Angel's face" the yellow hair makes a golden border. Arthegall's hand, lifted again to strike, drops; the sword falls from his fingers; he sinks upon his knees before her, making religion of his wonder and beseeching pardon of the injured goddess. And she, looking stern, stands over him threatening to strike if he will not rise and continue the combat. But old Glauce is at hand to bid her pause, and by degrees the face beheld in the magic mirror and the face of the kneeling warrior grow together and are seen to be one. When Scudamour greets the knight as "Arthegall,"

"Her heart did leap and all her heart-strings tremble
For sudden joy and secret fear withal."

There is no sudden love-making between the pair; Britomart's modest countenance, "so goodly grave and full of princely awe," acts as a check to ranging fancies. But the great hearts are drawing near and are at length made wholly one.

Yet Britomart is not incapable of a touch of honest jealousy. Her lover has been absent long; tidings come that he, the invincible warrior, has been made captive to a woman. The truth seems but too clear; Britomart shuts herself into her chamber in wrath and pain. If she could only fight with him and die! She throws herself on her bed lamenting.

"Yet did she not lament with loud alew
As women wont, but with deep sighs and singults few."

She is at length convinced by Talus that his master is indeed in the dungeon of the amazon. Britomart arms herself, and uttering no word, good or bad, looking right down, and with a heart very dangerous and fell, she rides to his delivery. She who had overthrown her lord in fight is now to be his saviour. But the sight of Arthegall clad in womanish attire is too full of shame; Britomart turns her head aside; it is, however, only for a moment, and then, filled with a sense of the piteousness of his disgrace, she hastens towards him to bring him comfort and restore him to his self-respect.

In Spenser's earliest volume of verse his muse masqued "in lowly shepherd's weeds." In the last book of his "Faerie Queene" he returns to pastoral poetry, but it is a pastoral poetry into which courtly grace and knightly prowess enter. The stories of Serena and of Pastorella lie side by side, and each heightens the effect of the other. With Serena we are among the woods, their shadows, their wild recesses and fantastic boughs; her page is the gentle salvage man; her foes are the salvage folk, who have laid her naked for sacrifice upon their altar under the faint light of stars, and the din of whose horns and bagpipes is in our ears until Calepine thrusts into the throng and delivers his love from fear, though not from shamefastness. With Pastorella we are amid the fields, at the sheepfold, and among the little cots where shepherds lie; we listen to their gay singing and the rustic melody of their pipes. Old Melibee, half shepherd, half sage, is such a reverent figure as William Blake loved to present in his pastoral subjects. The girl heroine of Spenser's sixth book

might have been a sister of Shakspere's Perdita or Miranda. Like them, she is a child of high estate removed from courtly surroundings into a way of life more simple, more free, where objects and interests are few, natural, and enduring. As with them, a courtly lover comes to make discovery of his rustic princess, and she returns to the place assigned her by her birth. Like Perdita, she is queen of the country side, mistress of rural junketings, the prettiest lass that ever ran on the green sward, and nothing that she does

> "But smacks of something greater than herself."

We think of her as she stood upon the hillock when first seen by Calidore, crowned with flowers, clad in home-made green, and environed with a garland of lovely maidens; the lusty swains pipe and sing her praises, "and oft rejoice and oft for wonder shout." We think of her as she meekly leads her little flock at her old foster father's bidding, as she tends at supper while the princely Calidore sits and cannot choose but follow her with his eyes, as she gathers strawberries in the green wood with her rival lovers, as she graciously receives the rustic presents of Coridon, squirrel and sparrow, or looks on while the Knight of Courtesy, a shepherd for the nonce, pulls the rugged teats of her mother ewes. We remember her in the dimness of the brigand's cave, and how joy came to her with the clear voice of Calidore, and again as she stood half arrayed and all amazed at that moment when old Melissa espied the rosy mark upon her breast, and ran in haste, as one dismayed yet full of joy, to tell her mistress that the long lost babe was found.

The "Faerie Queene" is not, however, a legend solely of good women. Being bound "by fealty to all womankind," Spenser has not permitted himself to shrink from presenting ideals of feminine weakness, folly, shame, and vice. There is the false and foul Duessa; there is Acrasia, that Circean enchantress who changes her lovers from men to swine; and Phædria, the lightest of idle bubbles on the Idle Lake; and Hellenore, whose shameless coquetry soon turns to a thing of grosser name; and the superb, wanton Malecasta; and Lucifera, queen of spiritual pride; and Philotime, queen of worldly ambition; and Radigund, the revoltress against the obedience of her sex; and the brutal Argante; and Mirabella, with her little hard and shallow heart; and the blind and malevolent Abessa; and the grisly hags Envy and Detraction. Spenser broadly divides the evil from the good. If he does not make an imaginative inquest into complex problems of life and character, he serves us perhaps more by his high yet serene ardour on behalf of all that is excellent and against all that is ignoble. The only passage in the "Faerie Queene" touched with cynicism, the story put with dramatic propriety into the mouth of the Squire of Dames, is derived from Ariosto.

SHAKSPERE'S PORTRAITURE OF WOMEN.

FOR a critic to say anything of Shakspere that has not been said already is as hard as it would be for a poet to sing a new song about the sun. But we vivify our old impressions by rearranging them; each reflects the light, flinging a gleam or a sparkle on its neighbour, and when we alter the position of this or that, nothing seems to remain quite the same; we have given our kaleidoscope a turn. On this account, if on no other, we may value the chronological method of studying an author's works of late pursued so industriously; it has been a new way of arranging our knowledge, and so it has reanimated our dulled impressions. Even, if another mode of study should supersede this, as is not unlikely, it will have done some service in its day.

Mrs Jameson, in her eloquent volumes of criticism, "The Characteristics of Women," grouped Shakspere's heroines under a kind of psychological classification: there were the "characters of intellect," and the "characters of passion and imagination," and the "characters of the affections." And thus Miranda and Juliet came hand in hand to greet us; and again, Hermione and Desdemona. Let us see whether we can feel the old immortal beauty in some degree afresh, and cheat ourselves into supposing that we are making some small discoveries about Shakspere, and the growth

of his character and genius, by glancing along his portraits of women in the order in which they were actually conceived by him. We shall at least spend an hour in the best possible company. These ideal figures cannot fail to quicken our sensibility for what is beautiful in real life; there are hidden or marred ideals all around us in the actual men and women, in the commonplace lives of the street, the market, and the fireside. If we knew every motion of an Imogen or a Cordelia, it might be possible to detect the heart of one of these beating under a modern gown. We do not remove from the real world when we pass into the world of true imagination; rather we train our eyes to make the most precious discoveries in the region of every-day fact.

But why not go to a woman to hear about women? Why expect to learn as much from Shakspere as from George Eliot or Jane Austen? It is true that there were secrets known to Jane Austen and George Eliot at which even Shakspere only guessed; secrets of womanly fortitude in petty things, which are properly known only to those who feel where the shoe pinches; secrets of feminine weakness visible to keen eyes which are tempted by no chivalric sentiment to blink the fact. The commonplaces of masculine satire on woman have something clumsy and stupid about them; it is well to have them near us as stones to fling on occasion, but they seldom hit the mark. If the barbed dart is to quiver in the flesh, it should be aimed by a sister's hand; she is aware at what precise points the armour is unjointed. But, on the other hand, there are many truths which

each sex can best tell about the other. Our personality does not consist solely or chiefly in the little hard central kernel, which we call the *ego:* we effuse ourselves, and live more in this active expanded self than in the midmost cell of our being. And each sex dilates and discovers itself chiefly in presence of the opposite sex. Therefore, a man may know some things about women of which a woman is hardly aware, and (if we would only believe it) a woman may know a good deal about men which a man will stoutly deny, yet which is most certain; only, women are seldom courageous enough to tell us what they know, and we are pleased by this timidity, choosing to live on in our fool's paradise. Each sex holds the mirror up to the other, and what matter if it be a magic mirror? We may call Charlotte Brontë's admirable M. Paul Emanuel a woman's hero; and so he is, for he is a man reflected in a woman's magic mirror. But one of our sex who would understand the potency of manhood, will by no means waste his time if he studies the character of M. Paul Emanuel. He will see manhood, presented indeed in a magic mirror, but raying out its fierce undeniable attractions, and grappling with myriad spiritual tentacles the feminine heart. Could we have conceived it so? And in like manner we may say of Shakspere's heroines, who are women beheld in the most wonderful of magic mirrors, that they are more perfectly feminine than any woman could have found it in her heart or brain to make them. By what art of divination could she have guessed all the potency of her sex?

There are poets and artists whose genius brings forth

men-children only. The greatest of Shakspere's fellow-dramatists, Ben Jonson, was one of these. Admirable as were his wit, his judgment, his learning, his satiric power, his knowledge of life, his reverence for art, his constructive talent, he could not fashion a noble or beautiful woman. Ben Jonson wrought superbly in bronze, and ran his metal into carefully constructed moulds; he could not work in such finer elements of air and light as those from which a Miranda is framed, and some of these subtle elements enter into each of Shakspere's heroines. Out of the long range of Jonson's plays, do we remember a single female figure to stand by the side of Imogen or Desdemona or Juliet? And yet Jonson had but to look around him; he was honoured with the acquaintance of many noble English ladies of the early Stuart days; in his own mother he might have found the model of an ancient Roman matron; and in classical literature, which lay as an open book before him, he must have known Antigone, Electra, Medea, Clytemnestra, and Helen of Troy. Why was he defrauded in the offspring of his imagination—father of sons who were sisterless? Was it because his nature had never swayed beneath a woman's influence? That rugged buttress of manhood hardly felt the moving airs and tremulous waters—a self-poised, self-centred mass. Whatever may have been the cause, the fact is so; the greatest save one of Elizabethan playwrights knew only half of humanity, and therefore knew that half imperfectly. On the other hand, a far less robust genius, John Webster, one of Shakspere's dramatic disciples, delighted in nothing so much as in full-

length studies of tragic female figures. There are indeed wonderful creations in his plays beside these—sinister and cynical faces of men apparent in the gloom. But in his greatest dramas all exists for the sake of the one woman after whom each drama is named—the Duchess of Malfi, Webster's lady of sorrow, and his White Devil, Vittoria Corombona, on whom, splendid in her crime, he turns a high light of imagination that dazzles while we gaze. This was not Shakspere's method. In no play of his do we find a woman as centre of the piece, or conceived as a dramatic unit. And hence indeed it is almost an error to study the character of any of Shakspere's heroines apart from the associate with whom she plays her part. Beatrice is hardly intelligible apart from Benedick; the echoing voice of love rebounds and rebounds in Romeo and Juliet, inextricably intermingling from lover to lover, until death has stilled all sound; in that circle of traitors through which Shakspere leads us in his Inferno, Macbeth and his Queen are miserably united for ever by their crime and its retribution.

Shakspere, again, compares well with some of our highest poets who have indeed created true women, but who have created many after a single type. Such was Shelley; such also was Byron. If we set aside the wonderful figure of Beatrice Cenci, we find that Shelley in his highest moods has but one conception of womanhood, varied to suit the circumstances of various poems. She is Cythna now, and now Asia; a beautiful and inspired prophetess—a prophetess who may be a martyr and a saviour. She is the "woman with a

mission," exalted and idealized. She is to emancipate the world by the vision of beauty, love and truth. At her apparition the chains of tyrants and the spiritual bonds of priests are to dissolve and cease to be. She is made indeed to be loved and worshipped; yet almost more as incarnate love and truth than as an individual human being. Very different is the Byronic heroine, so often presented in the Eastern tales. She has no devotion to anything abstract; no zeal for liberty or truth; all her devotion is lavished at the feet of one despotic lover, and the only right she claims is the right to be his slave. Another of our highest poets has given us three great figures of women, and no more. From all that he imagined admirable and heroic in woman the youth Milton created the Lady of his Comus; from all that he imagined attractive and desirable, including a sweet inferiority as one element of attraction, Milton in his manhood created the general mother, Eve; from all that he imagined detestable in woman he created in his austere old age the figure of the enchantress Dalila. These are Milton's heroines—one the child of admiration, one of love, and the last of loathing.

Among the *dramatis personæ* of a single play of Shakspere's, and of this play alone, there is the conspicuous absence of any important female character. It is the tragedy of despair, "Timon of Athens." Two or three sentences are spoken by Phrynia and Timandra, and that is all. In their foul, few words and in their crying for gold, they merely represent the vice of Athens, from which Timon has fled; they possess no individu-

ality, and therefore (like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in "Hamlet") they are coupled, and never appear singly; they show themselves only to demonstrate that the very virtue of womanhood is extinct in the luxurious city, and thus to intensify the despair of the young misanthrope. In all Shakspere's plays there is only one absolute infidel as regards womanly truth and goodness, and he is Shakspere's one irredeemable villain, Iago. Or rather, we should say, Iago can perceive Desdemona's purity and sweetness, but he cannot feel them; they leave him cold as a serpent in the sunshine. "She is full of most blessed condition," exclaims Roderigo. "Blessed fig's-end!" cries the atheist, who can feel no divinity in man, "the wine she drinks is made of grapes. If she had been blessed, she would never have loved the Moor. Blessed pudding!" The loss of faith in woman is treated in two or three of Shakspere's plays, and is always recognised as a turning-point or crisis in the development of character. Hamlet might have endured his father's untimely death, and the loss of the Danish crown; he was a student and a lover; and at no time really ambitious to be a king. It was his mother's frailty which transformed his grief into a corroding decay of all joyous energy; it was this which made the world appear to him an unweeded garden, ripening to seed-time; it was this which poisoned his love for Ophelia—"Frailty, thy name is woman." And yet he never wholly despairs, for in the great scene which follows the triumphant discovery of Claudius' guilt, he assays to wring his mother's heart as if it were made of penetrable stuff; he pleads with her for righteousness—

strange preacher! a son to a mother—and he receives the reward of his bold cruelty-in-kindness:—

> "O Hamlet speak no more,
> Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,
> And there I see such black and grained spots
> As will not leave their tinct."

Again, in "Troilus and Cressida" it is a turning-point in the life of the young champion of Troy when he sees Cressida, who has heretofore been for him all purity and passion, wantoning lip and hand with Diomed beneath the torchlight of the Grecian camp. Happily the gallant youth has by his side worldly-wisdom incarnate in the person of Ulysses; and yet the pinch of death could not well be sharper:—

> "Let it not be believed for womanhood!
> Think, we had mothers; do not give advantage
> To stubborn critics apt, without a theme,
> For depravation, to square the general sex
> By Cressid's rule; rather think this not Cressid."

Troilus comes out of the boy's fiery trial successfully. He is cured of love, as far as we can discern, for the rest of his life; but he has suddenly become a man, strung up by this bitter tonic for the work of a man, yet made a little merciless, and a little reckless by the fact that life has grown a thing of less value than heretofore in his eyes:—

> "Troilus hath done to-day
> Mad and fantastic execution,
> Engaging and redeeming of himself
> With such a careless force and forceless care
> As if that luck, in very spite of cunning,
> Bade him win all."

But Troilus is young. If the same anguish, or

one far more cruel, but of a like kind, were to come upon a man in mature years, a man of fiery nature, who had staked all his hopes and all his faith on a single cast, and who had lost, or deemed himself to have lost, could such an one like Troilus begin a new career, and transform his loss into a bitter gain? Shakspere gives the answer; we hear it in the great throbs and heavings of Othello's breast:—

> "O now for ever
> Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
> Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars
> That make ambition virtue! O farewell!"

So much Shakspere tells us of the havoc that may be wrought in a man's life and character, by loss of faith in a mother, a lover, or a wife. And, on the other hand, who has said with more energy of conviction than Shakspere that even for one who stands upon the heights of virtue higher heights may become visible in the light of a woman's heroism? It is no romantic boy who speaks in his first fervour of love, but the noblest Roman in presence of one who had been tested and not found wanting (and here Shakspere follows almost the words of Plutarch):—

> "O ye gods
> Render me worthy of this noble wife."

"Timon," Shakspere's tragedy of despair, is the only play in which no woman is portrayed. From the first, evidently he was attracted as an artist to the study of female character. The two poems, on which in his earlier years he hoped to rest his fame, are laboured studies of womanly character and passion; and as if

resolved to spread his drag-net wide, so that nothing might escape him, he studies the remote extremes of womanhood—in the one, enamoured Venus flushed with all the sensuous ardours of the god; in the other, Lucrece, pale with despair, and heroic with the chastity of a Roman wife. Probably the first play of Shakspere, in which he worked out ideas of his own, not following in the steps of a predecessor, is "Love's Labour's Lost." It is throughout a piece of homage, half-serious, half-playful, to the influence of women. It tells us that the best school in which to study is the school of life, and that to rouse and quicken all our faculties, so that we may learn brightly the lessons of that school, we chiefly need the inspiration of love. The play looks as if it were Shakspere's mirthful reply to the sneers and slights of some of his fellow-dramatists, who had come up to town from the University well-read in the classical literature supposed in those Renaissance days to be the sole source of true culture, and who were indignant that a young fellow from Stratford, who had at best picked up a little irregular schooling, "small Latin and less Greek," from a country pedagogue, should aspire to the career of dramatic poet. If Shakspere was not a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge, he was something better—he had graduated in the school of life; he had looked about him with quick, observant eyes; he had thought and felt; had struggled, sported, loved; he had laughed at Stratford Dogberries, had perhaps broken open the lodge and killed the deer of the Stratford Mr Justice Shallow; and if he had not kissed the keeper's daughter (which is far from im-

probable), he had certainly kissed Anne Hatheway to his heart's content. And now in "Love's Labour's Lost," while all the affectations of mock dignity and pedantry, and spurious learning, and fantastical refinement are laughed to scorn with a young man's light and vigorous laughter, Shakspere comes forward to maintain that our best schoolmasters are life and love, and he adds, half-playfully, half-seriously, that if we wish to say our lesson brightly and well, we must first go and learn it from a woman:—

> "Other slow arts entirely keep the brain,
> And therefore, finding barren practisers,
> Scarce show a harvest of their heavy toil;
> But love, first learned in a lady's eyes,
> Lives not alone immured in the brain,
> But, with the motion of all elements,
> Courses as swift as thought in every power,
> And gives to every power a double power
> Above their functions and their offices."

In the speaker of these words, the Berowne of "Love's Labour's Lost," we seem to discern a likeness, more than merely fanciful, to the youthful Shakspere.

The early comedies are more interesting for what they promise than for what they actually present. One alone remains unsurpassed in its kind, the fairy comedy of fancy and frolic, "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The characterisation of the lovers is somewhat faint; the play is not designed to interpret depths of passion: were we too seriously interested in real life, how could we lend belief to the story of Oberon's jealousy, and to the wonders of the moonlit wood? It is a dream, and the figures are a little shadowy, like figures in a dream.

Hermia, indeed, is sufficiently distinguished from Helena, but neither is strongly drawn. Hippolyta, the Amazonian Queen, so nobly matched with the heroic Theseus, is a fine sketch of the great lady in her hour of ease, as Shakspere may have observed her when playing by command in the hall of some English castle. One knavish jest of Fairyland may have a meaning which extends into the world of men and women; with juice of love-in-idleness on her lids a Titania may grow enamoured of a Bottom, wearing the ass-head on his shoulders. Such things have been seen outside the Athenian wood. Have not some of ourselves once or twice beheld a fairy creature as delicately bred, as finely nurtured as the elvish Queen hanging enraptured on the arm of some thick-headed Bottom the weaver, or Bottom the captain, or Bottom the curate, who never fails to accept his good fortune with a sublime air of superiority? As Mephistopheles, in his fiendish fashion, said of Margaret, so we may say of Titania, "She is not the first," nor dare we hope that she will be the last.

"The Two Gentlemen of Verona," in some respects a very unsatisfactory play, is a most interesting one, because it contains hints of so much that Shakspere afterwards worked out. The scene is Italy, to which the poet's imagination so often reverted. The clown, Launce, accompanied by his idolised Crab, is a worthy predecessor of Feste and Touchstone. The lovers are not now dream-figures; each is clearly and livingly portrayed, and each acts, not as Oberon or Puck may choose, but as his own character pre-ordains. Shakspere gallantly takes care that the advantage shall be upon the woman's

side; for while Valentine is indeed the sketch of a noble youth, faithful friend and chivalric lover, Proteus is false to friendship and fickle in love; but both the maidens, she of Verona and she of Milan, are flawless of heart, clear of purpose, and courageous of will. Julia is the first of those exquisite disguisers in male apparel, who are as graceful and as feminine in doublet and hose as in petticoat, and who were favourite children of Shakspere's imagination; Julia first, and following her appear Portia, Jessica, Rosalind, Viola, Imogen. The investiture in strange attire, and the assumption of a different sex from their own, is too piquant a stage adventure to be forgotten, and Shakspere returns to it with ever-renewed pleasure. It is an indication of the early date of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" that there is some lack of refinement in the treatment of this incident. In the later plays the treatment varies according as the heroine is compelled to assume her disguise by painful stress of circumstances, or accepts the transformation not without some adequate motive, yet half in a spirit of gaiety and adventure. Imogen, escaped from her father's Court, and now among the wild Welsh mountains, accompanied by a single attendant, who must presently leave her, and almost done to death by her husband's written accusations, which are crueller to her than blows, is advised by Pisanio to take means for the speedy solution of her doubts respecting Posthumus' fidelity—

> "O for such means!
> Though peril to my modesty, not death on't,
> I would adventure."

It is deadly earnest with Imogen, and she has not a smile to waste upon her exchange of costume—

> "Nay, be brief;
> I see into thy end, and am almost
> A man already."

It calls for courage, not gaiety, to hazard this adventure, and in Pisanio's speech, describing what her garb and bearing must be, there is a touch of remorse to think that so rare a creature as Imogen must become as common a thing as a pretty, sweet-voiced page in hat and doublet—

> "You must forget to be a woman; change
> Command into obedience, fear and niceness—
> The handmaids of all women, or more truly
> Woman it pretty self—into a waggish courage,
> Ready in gibes, quick-answer'd, saucy, and
> As quarrellous as the weasel; nay, you must
> Forget that rarest treasure of your cheek,
> Exposing it—but, oh, the harder heart!
> Alack no remedy!—to the greedy touch
> Of common-kissing Titan, and forget
> Your laboursome and dainty trims, wherein
> You made great Juno angry."

And Imogen accepts the necessity with a serious courage; no mirth or mock or bright self-raillery, but all subdued yet hopeful earnest—

> "This attempt
> I am soldier to, and will abide it with
> A prince's courage."

Far otherwise is it with Rosalind and with Portia. There is no real suffering for Rosalind in leaving a weary Court ruled by the usurper, and flying to the forest of Arden, where her father and his companions are fleeting their time carelessly as they did in the golden world;

where, moreover, many young gentlemen flock to her father; why not among them a certain gallant wrestler, son of the banished Duke's old friend, Sir Rowland de Boys? She will not wander alone, for Celia goes with her, and Touchstone is to be a comfort to her travel. Rosalind is not a wronged and solitary wife like Imogen; she is a girl of bright temper, quick inventive wit, and glad heart. Accordingly, she throws herself into the adventure with *abandon*, and will play her part with high spirit. She will be one of the young gentlemen who flock to the forest—

> "Were it not better,
> Because that I am more than common tall,
> That I did suit me all points like a man,
> A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh,
> A boar-spear in my hand, and—in my heart
> Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will—
> We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,
> As many other mannish cowards have
> That do outface it with their semblances."

This martial disguise of Rosalind, with the gallant curtle-axe upon her thigh, was all the more fortunate, because Portia had put on the doctor's gown, and a contrast was desirable. With Portia, as with Rosalind, there is no cause of real distress; she sets forth to succour Bassanio's friend; she travels to the ferry in her coach with Nerissa; and her first thought is the delighted one—

> "We'll see our husbands
> Before they think of us."

We know with what a divine dignity Portia maintains her cause of mercy before the Doge and Seignory of

Venice; but in the glee of anticipating the adventure, her fancy quite runs away with her, and she pictures herself in her strange apparel to Nerissa with a delightful exaggeration of the young-mannishness to which she never actually condescends—

> "I'll hold thee any wager
> When we are both accoutred like young men,
> I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,
> And wear my dagger with the braver grace,
> And speak between the change of man and boy
> With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps
> Into a manly stride, and speak of frays
> Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies,
> How honourable ladies sought my love,
> Which I denying, they fell sick and died;
> I could not do withal; then I'll repent
> And wish, for all that, that I had not killed them;
> And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell,
> That men shall swear I have discontinued school
> Above a twelvemonth. I have within my mind
> A thousand raw tricks of these bragging Jacks
> Which I will practise."

We know how Portia's bearing belied these sportive announcements; how grave and graceful, how learned and persuasive, how keen-sighted and yet elevated, with a touch of spiritual exaltation, the young doctor proved in that great affair of life and death. It is precisely with these disguisers that Shakspere is most careful to accentuate the feminine characteristics. Bassanio protests before the Court that he would sacrifice even his wife, dear to him as life itself, to deliver his friend from the Jew. There is more of Portia than of a Daniel come to judgment in the young lawyer's outbreak—

> "Your wife would give you little thanks for that
> If she were by, to hear you make the offer."

Not that Portia for a moment questions Bassanio's love; but what woman is not rejoiced to obtain a playful advantage over her husband? And Portia, who has been defrauded of the pleasure of a lover's quarrel, now must put an edge on her profound content by the brief pretence of a wife's quarrel with her husband. Viola, in her disguise, grows not mannish, but more poignantly feminine—

> "Dear lad, believe it,
> For they shall yet belie thy happy years
> That say thou art a man: Diana's lip
> Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe
> Is as the maiden's organ shrill and sound,
> And all is semblative a woman's part."

In the forest of Arden and in her martial dress, Rosalind is, if possible, more exquisitely a woman than when she threw the chain around Orlando's neck: "Good my complexion! dost thou think, though I am caparisoned like a man, I have a doublet and hose in my disposition?" And is Imogen even when lying asleep—"fresh lily, and whiter than the sheets"—more purely feminine than she is in the cave of Belarius—

> "Behold divineness
> No elder than a boy;"

or when borne as dead in her brother's arms, and lily-like once more—

> "The bird is dead
> That we have made so much on.
> O sweetest, fairest lily,
> My brother wears thee not the one half so well
> As when thou grew'st thyself."

Whereupon Arviragus recites the names of all sister-

flowers—pale primrose, azured harebell, odorous eglantine—which shall keep the grave of Fidele fair and fragrant.

We pass to an entirely different group of characters when we enter on the historical plays. The great affairs of State make havoc in the domestic affections, and women are in a peculiar degree the sufferers. They show like trees that have faced a fierce gale, and limbs are rent away from some, and some are leafless and contorted, and some are shaken to the roots, and some lie prone upon the ground. Here and there at rare intervals appears a woman in whom place and power have nurtured a vast ambition, under the influence of which she has grown strong, and opposed successfully the storm of fate; yet the day comes when even such an one is bent or broken, and her fall is terrible. The ambitious wife of the Protector Gloster has her will, and plays her part in fortune's pageant bravely for a while—

> "She sweeps it through the court with troops of ladies
> More like an empress than Duke Humphrey's wife."

But by-and-by the wheel of fortune is turned full circle, and the proud dame stands in London streets robed in the white penance sheet, her feet bare to the flints, a taper in her hand, ribald verses pinned upon her back, a jeering rabble at her heels—

> "Trow'st thou, that e'er I'll look upon the world,
> Or count them happy that enjoy the sun?
> No: dark shall be my light and night my day;
> To think upon my pomp shall be my hell."

The historical plays are filled with the outcries of women. Now it is the Duchess of York pleading pas-

sionately at King Henry's feet for the life of her first-born, while old York in a frenzy of terrified loyalty demands the young man's death. Now it is the new-made bride from whom the bridegroom is torn away to make slaughter among her own kin—it is Blanche crying to Lewis—

> "Upon thy wedding day!
> Against the blood that thou hast married!
> . . . . . .
> O husband hear me!"

Now it is the wife torn from her husband's side that he may go the way to the grave alone—it is Isabel parted from Richard, but first made to feel his political, and worse, his moral effacement; made to see her "fair rose wither" beyond the power of "true-love tears" to "wash him fresh again." Now it is the widow mourning for her husband—Lady Percy hanging upon old Northumberland to restrain him from the wars, because her heart is full of the thought of her gallant Hotspur slain, and memory makes it tremble. Now it is Constance weeping for her Arthur, who has been overwhelmed by the opposing forces in whose midst he stood:—

> "Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
> Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
> Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
> Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
> Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form."

Now it is the wretched Anne, wife of Richard of Gloster, whose stifled misery has its outbreak when she finds that she is to be dragged to the throne over the bodies of the slaughtered princes:—

"Oh, would to God, that the inclusive verge
Of golden metal, that must round my brow
Were red-hot steel, to sear me to the brain!
Anointed let me be with deadly venom."

Now it is an antiphony of lamentations, rising from a royal mother, two fatherless children, and their feeble grandame. Perhaps as much wretchedness may be discovered in the first word of nervous alarm uttered by Edward the Fourth's Queen, Elizabeth, while her ailing husband, who has put her son's minority into the trust of Richard, lies upon his sick bed—

"If he were dead what would betide on me?"

But now that he is dead and Clarence has been made away with, Elizabeth lifts up her voice and cries aloud—

"Give me no help in lamentation,
I am not barren to bring forth complaints.
. . . . . .
Ah, for my husband, for my dear Lord Edward!
Children.—Ah, for our father, for our dear Lord Clarence!
Duchess.—Alas, for both, both mine, Edward and Clarence!"

And so the terzett of sorrow goes on, a lamentation in which, through the stronger crying of the Queen, the treble of childish voices, and the quavering pipe of old age, may be distinguished.

But there is something more terrible than the fall of princes or the misery of a queen. It is when thwarted passion and foiled ambition transform a woman's entire nature into a hunger for revenge. One portentous figure occupies a large place in four connected plays—that of Margaret of Anjou, the formidable wife of the false saint and true dastard, Henry the Sixth. For her invention, or for retrieving her from the chronicles, perhaps

we owe more thanks to Marlowe than to Shakspere; but doubtless the conception of Marlowe was adopted by Shakspere, and heightened and refined. We follow her whole history from the day on which in the glory of early womanhood she meets her lover Suffolk, the Lancelot of this Guinevere, to the day when, grey-haired, loverless, husbandless, and childless, she seats herself in the dust by the side of the mother and the wife of her royal antagonist, Edward the Fourth, and teaches them, with terrible sounding of the depths of misery, how to curse their enemies:—

> "Forbear to sleep the night and fast the day;
> Compare dead happiness with living woe;
> Think that thy babes were fairer than they were,
> And he that slew them fouler than he is;
> Bettering thy loss makes the bad causer worse;
> Revolving this will teach thee how to curse." *

Beautiful, false, amorous, tyrannous, cruel, remorseless, Margaret had been in her days of pride and power. When deprived of all that makes life precious in her eyes, she returns in wretchedness to haunt the place of her former greatness. There, says Mrs Jameson, she stalks around "like a terrible phantom of departed majesty, uncrowned, unsceptered, desolate, powerless—or like a vampire thirsting for blood—or like a grim prophetess of evil, imprecating that ruin on the head of her enemies which she lived to see realised."

In the historical plays there is only one really happy woman—Katherine of France, who is wooed in such

* "*Think that thy babes were fairer than they were.*" Surely this line is worthy of either Shakspere or the highest spirit among his early fellow-dramatists.

soldier-like fashion by the great victor of Agincourt. Well for Kate that King Henry was first a man, and only in the second place a prince! Under the royal wooer, not regardless of State motives for the marriage, lay Prince Hal of the tavern, who had loved the frank realities of life better than the cold conventions of his father's Court. He does not give the passion of a Romeo or the reverence of a Brutus, but in all honesty he can say: "In faith, Kate, the elder I wax, the better I shall appear; my comfort is that old age, that ill layer up of beauty, can do no more spoil upon my face; thou hast me, if thou hast me, at the worst; and thou shalt wear me, if thou wear me, better and better; and therefore tell me, most fair Katherine, will you have me?"

Before the English historical plays were brought to a close (and from these we set aside King Henry the Eighth as belonging to a later period), Shakspere had produced two great portraits of women, both lovers who move under the sunlight and starlight of Italy, both beautiful and ardent, yet in their beauty unlike as can possibly be, one the most afflicted, the other the most joyous of wedded ladies — Juliet and the Venetian Portia. Juliet (for we need hardly take account of Lavinia in "Titus Andronicus") is the first-born tragic heroine of Shakspere's imagination. Whether she was or ever would have been a woman of intellect or a woman capable of devotion to a moral ideal, we neither know nor greatly care to know. She was assuredly endowed with genius of the heart. It is enough that Juliet's nature was one clear flame of love, and that death took her, or rather not death but love. If in a rich garden

we found some red-hearted flower not yet unclosed, and if we had arrived just at the moment when sunlight fell upon it, and the petals suddenly burst open, and all the sweetness and bloom in an instant spread abroad, we should have before our eyes an image of Juliet's awakening to passion, and of her instantaneous transit from childhood to womanhood. In this tragedy there is no division of interests, no secondary plot, no double current of feeling. One and the same desire seizes at one and the same instant the hearts of Romeo and Juliet; one and the same doom awaits them. Hence, from its singleness of passion and of plot, the play acquires a lyrical character. In the moonlit garden and at dawn, when—

> "Envious streaks
> Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east,"

the voices of the lovers sound amid the notes of nightingales like the nightingales' own. If we would describe the character of Juliet, we have said what is essential when we have said "she loves." She loves in the heroic fashion, for even as a great thought makes the thinker indifferent to food and sleep, nay, to life itself, and as a great ambition makes the man of action indifferent to these, so the singleness of her love makes Juliet regardless of all except love, and bears her onward to her doom. Here, for the first time, Shakspere courageously explores the extremes of human passion—the aerial pinnacle of joy, the cavernous abyss of grief. The emotion of love which occupies the play is single, and there is little complexity in either of the two chief characters; but love is not quite the same as manifesting itself in man and in woman; it is the same, and it is

not the same, as if the god of love had put twin reeds to his lips and blown, but the harmony was made up of tenor and contralto tones. So with the passion of Romeo and Juliet. And lest we should be cloyed by sweetness or by sorrow, Shakspere has filled in a background of most varied character, showing us the cold Italian beauty, Juliet's mother, who had wedded old Capulet not for love, and who now strives with little maxims to preach down her daughter's heart; and Mercutio, a free-lance between the rival houses, whose wit lightens and flashes as swift as his rapier blade, whose quick brain and nimble fancy are needed to set off the brooding passion and rich imaginings of Romeo. Nor in this background may we overlook the first entirely humorous study of womanhood in Shakspere's plays—the Nurse, stoutest and most consequential of ladies, Love's breathless go-between, sage counsellor in amorous perplexities, delicate creature whose injured honour Peter the fan-bearer must defend, whose overwrought feelings require from time to time the soothing influences of the aqua vitæ flask. Would that, in addition to the Nurse of Juliet and Mrs Quickly of the Boar's Head Tavern, Shakspere had given us a gallery of these humorous portraits, for neither the creator of Mrs Gamp nor the creator of Mrs Poyser has surpassed him in these two.

Portia, the rich heiress of Belmont, charms us not by the power of one predominant attribute, but by the harmony of many qualities rarely found in union. She is not like Juliet, a passionate child suddenly transformed to woman. She does not like Juliet suffer from the

tyrannous environment of her elders. She is mistress of a noble house, and already she has known many wooers from the four quarters of the globe, until this business of wooing has grown a weariness: "By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world." If only she were free to choose, for to Shakspere's heroines it is in the highest degree inconvenient to be merely chosen. From Juliet to Desdemona, from Helena to Miranda, if they do not themselves actually woo, they are at least active accomplices in their wooing: but Portia must accept her fate from a casket of lead. So her father, ever virtuous, decreed when dying, and with Portia her father's will is to be loyally executed. From the tedium of the rich heiress's life she is roused by veritable love; but how can she give that love expression? Sainte-Beuve has noticed that a subtlety and fineness of edge has been put upon satire in France by the laws regulating the press; a writer who fears the censure cannot blurt out a brutal invective; he must cast about how to say the same thing, or what comes to the same, in constitutional language. The check put by her father's will on Portia's love acts like the censure in France, and she is taught by it to say things with as full a meaning as any of Juliet's ardent outbreaks, but she says them exquisitely, and with a delicate propriety which adds to their charm. The most irresistible love-letter is that which may be read by every one; only to the eyes of the one person made wise by love the written words are replaced by invisible phrases set down in a sympathetic ink, shining forth when the poor leaf of paper is laid close to the warmth

of a heart. "There's something tells me," exclaims Portia—

> "There's something tells me, but it is not love,
> I would not lose you; and you know yourself
> Hate counsels not in such a quality."

This is the most graceful of confessions, and yet we must hesitate before declaring it more beautiful than Juliet's—

> "But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
> Than those that have more cunning to be strange;"

or the sacred boldness of Miranda's declaration—

> "Hence, bashful cunning!
> And prompt me, plain and holy Innocence!
> I am your wife, if you will marry me;
> If not, I'll die your maid."

Portia "stands for sacrifice," while her young Alcides goes to "redeem the virgin tribute" from the sea monster. But when the bar is broken, and the check removed which stayed the current of her love, how her whole life trembles rapturously forward to unite itself with Bassanio's! how humble and how proud she grows in her desire to set Bassanio above herself, "an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractis'd," yet soon to instruct the doge and his magnificoes! With what an eager delicacy of love does she strive to convince him (happy adventurer) that *she* is the fortunate one who is getting the best of the bargain! And in truth, Love like Death is a mighty leveller and in a moment has made them equal.

Portia marks an epoch in Shakspere's creations of female character. In her he first shows how he can

bring into vital union the various elements which go to make up a noble and cultivated woman. How refined an intellect, how ardent a heart! What a superb mundane life at Belmont amid its flowers, and statues, and music; what lofty spiritual views in the Court of Venice when she pleads for mercy! What beautiful earnestness, and what beautiful mirth! And Shakspere has confronted her feminine force, benignant as it is bright, with the remorseless masculine force and dark temper of Shylock. The same self-mastery which she had shown in carrying out the conditions of her father's will stands her in stead at the trial of Antonio. She does not hurry forward to confound her adversary or to relieve the merchant; but conducts the case to the issue she desires as an artist might achieve a work of art, testing first whether there be any humanity in Shylock; then, when it must be so, drawing him on to expose the absolute vindictiveness of his nature, and at precisely the right moment giving affairs the sudden turn which brings good out of evil. We should think of the young doctor less as an interpreter of the law than as an exquisite artist in the affairs of life.

It may seem strange that in plays later in the chronological order than "The Merchant of Venice," this refinement of portraiture is not maintained, and that ruder and more boisterous types of womanhood appear. Shakspere was led away from romantic comedy by the historical plays, and after "Henry the Fourth" and "Henry the Fifth" he transferred some of the roughness and realism of the lower scenes of the historical drama to the region of comedy. But as regards

"The Taming of the Shrew" (whatever its date may be) we must bear in mind that Shakspere worked upon the lines of an older play. And Kate the curst,— presently to become the most loyal of wives, is a good broad comedy figure, far more original and laughter-moving than the affectionate scold Adriana in "The Comedy of Errors." There is a gale of high spirits and good humour blowing through the piece. We have not a grain of pity to spare for Kate, who is far better pleased to find a conqueror than herself to conquer. Men must be such poor creatures if they cannot manage with bit and bridle a headstrong girl; on the whole, it is satisfactory to her to discover that there is at least one man of force and spirit in the world, and to know that he and no other has chosen her for his wife. And so Kate transfers all her boldness into the very effrontery of obedience; if she surrender at all, she must surrender unconditionally, and retain her self-will by sheer pride of self-effacement.

"The Merry Wives of Windsor," we are told, was written by command of "that gross-minded old baggage" (as Hartley Coleridge profanely calls her) Queen Elizabeth. Hartley Coleridge atones for his irreverence towards the bright occidental star by his words about the merry wives, words so happy that once heard they can never cease to form part of our remembrance of the play.

"The merry wives," he says, "are a delightful pair. Methinks I see them, with their comely, middle-aged visages, their dainty white ruffs and toys, their half witch-like conic hats, their full farthingales, their neat though not over slim waists, their housewifely keys, their girdles, their sly laughing looks, their apple-red

cheeks, their brows the lines whereon look more like the work of mirth than years. . . . The Mrs Quickly of Windsor is not mine hostess of the Boar's Head, but she is a very pleasant, busy, good-natured, unprincipled old woman whom it is impossible to be angry with." "And sweet Anne Page," adds the elvish poet and critic, "she is a pretty little creature whom one would like to take on one's knee."

We have travelled a wide space from the noble and gracious lady of Belmont. Even in that brilliant being, Beatrice, true lover, and gallant friend of her friend in distress, we miss the grace of Portia. Behind her delightful sauciness lie warmth and courage of heart, but Portia can be as mirthful without this playful effrontery, this appalling cleverness, and Portia can utter the noble periods of her plea for mercy, an achievement beyond the wit of Beatrice. "I am much sorry, sir," says Imogen when provoked by Cloten's professions of love—

> "I am much sorry, sir,
> You put me to forget a lady's manners
> By being so verbal."

Beatrice might have incurred the censure of Imogen as being "verbal," yet she is a delight to those who can see an actress of genius mediating between forwardness and good breeding, love and wit, game and earnest, and for ever saved by the gentlewoman from the hoyden. After three hundred years my dear Lady Disdain still holds the stage, and has lost none of her buoyancy or brightness. Beatrice bears a certain resemblance to the earlier Rosalind of "Love's Labour's Lost," who has the fault, if it be one, of being "verbal." We should remember that Shakspere's women must tread the boards and interest a crowd of spectators. It will not

do to make them all like Virgilia, the "gracious silence" of her husband. Among various devices to render the women of his plays interesting, two are often resorted to by Shakspere; either they are brilliant talkers, distinguished by their intellect and wit; such are Rosalind and Beatrice; or they are assigned parts which require from them some sustained and eloquent pleadings; so it is with Portia pleading for Antonio's life, so with Isabella pleading for the life of her brother, so with Volumnia pleading for the safety of Rome, so with Hermione and Katherine of Arragon, who are cited before judges to defend their own honour. From first to last we perceive that Shakspere delighted in vigour of character in woman as in man. His heroines are not composed of

> "Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
> And best distinguished by black, brown, or fair."

Mere softness and yieldingness do not attract Shakspere. He requires some strength of nature — not always intellectual strength, but if not intellectual strength or brilliancy, then vigour of the emotional or moral nature, and if not active courage, then the passive heroism of fortitude. At first it is evident that he was specially attracted, at least for stage purposes, by clever women. This is natural with a young man of genius; a student of character likes persons who have something to show, and before his eye has grown penetrating and skilled in the mystery of human character, he takes what is obvious and finds always something to interest him in what a bright intellect and frank good spirits throw out on the surface. But gradually he comes to

look for deeper and more precious things, until at last the most delicate and evanescent phenomena of the feelings interest him, and he finds more scope for study, and a better chance of exquisite discoveries in natures fine as that of some creature of the element, or so richly harmonious that no single feature can jut violently into relief.

Almost side by side with "Much Ado about Nothing" in point of date lies "As You Like It." The secret how to be at once "verbal" and faultless in manner was assuredly discovered by Rosalind. And the secret is this—that while every word uttered shall be vivid, and a challenge to the spirit of dulness, not one word shall be merely clever and intellectual. Rosalind's brilliance is never hard or cold. A cascade of sparkling speech sallies from her lips; it is sun-illumined as it falls, and over it hangs the iris of a lover's hope. The bluster of the shrew and the delightful raillery of Beatrice are refined in Rosalind to an exquisite sprightliness, which half conceals and half reveals the eager wishes and tender alarms of her heart. What joy to such a woman as Rosalind to be, as it were, the goddess of destiny to three pairs of lovers, including amongst them Orlando and herself!

Having brought to perfection one type of womanhood, Shakspere turns to another type, which we find represented by Helena in "All's Well that Ends Well," and by Isabella in "Measure for Measure." "At the entrance," I have said elsewhere, "to the dark and dangerous tragic world into which Shakspere was now about to pass stand the figures of Isabella and Helena,

one the embodiment of conscience, the other the embodiment of will." In a world of over-running foulness and shame, Isabella stands the representative of heroic chastity. The change from the forest of Arden to the city of Vienna, where corruption boils and bubbles, is not greater than the change from Rosalind to Isabel. Here are other and less innocent burghers than the dappled deer; here are neither frolic nor song as in the greenwood of France; but, instead of these, pleadings for life, desperate inducements to sin, grave searching of hearts, wrestlings with evil, the laying bare of self-deceit. We pass from the freedom of the fields and woods to the damps of the prison cell. Through all moves Isabella immaculate; but, like Spenser's patron knight of chastity, the virgin Britomart, she finds at the last that there is no purity so invincible as that of love. A heart may be chaste as ice, or chaste as fire, and Isabella's is of the latter kind. We remember her as "a thing ensky'd and sainted," yet as the Duke's betrothed, and united with him in the task of restoring order in his evil city of Vienna. Helena, the physician's daughter, is also made to be a healer and restorer; with her it is not a sinful city that needs healing but one proud boy, on whom she has lavished undeserved affection, and whom she watches over with a fond protectiveness. In this play we meet with a charming example of Shakspere's treatment of the relations of woman with woman, of which another example is found in the beautiful girls' friendship of Rosalind and Celia. The aged Countess and her adopted daughter Helena, although Helena's love of the Countess's son

might easily have disturbed their harmony, perfectly understand each other, and it is the patent of Helena's nobility that her confidant and the partner in her plot is no other than Bertram's mother. When her son's cruel words to Helena are read aloud before the Countess, she breaks forth, her indignation and love commingling—

> "There's nothing here that is too good for him,
> But only she; and she deserves a lord,
> That twenty such rude boys might tend upon
> And call her hourly, mistress."

"I can almost," writes Mr Hudson, "find it in my heart to adore the beauty of youth, yet this blessed old creature is enough to persuade me that age may be more beautiful still."

Perhaps it was at this period, and in contrast with the saintly strength of Isabel, and the protective devotion of Helena, that Shakspere created the only light woman in all his plays—Cressida. Poor bubble of vanity and sensuality (and with the gleam and grace of a floating bubble) she serves, if for nothing else, at least to prove that Cleopatra belongs to another class than hers. With one quarter of her small loveless self for Troilus, and one quarter for Diomed, and the rest for any other hopeful candidates of the Grecian or the Trojan camp, she makes us feel that Cleopatra, for whom Antony has at least been the supreme sensation of her life, possesses a certain depth of character and reality of passion. It was certainly about this date that Shakspere drew his only portrait of a woman who, having once loved nobly, yields to a second and a base affection—Gertrude,

Hamlet's mother. And Ophelia, "sweet rose of May," must not even she be placed among those women whose love, through incapacity of nature rather than through fault, brings no strength or healing with it? "Observe," writes Mr Ruskin, "among all the principal figures in Shakspere's plays there is only one weak woman—Ophelia; and it is because she fails Hamlet at the critical moment, and is not, and cannot in her nature be, a guide to him when he needs her most, that all the bitter catastrophe follows."

"Hamlet" lies close to "Julius Cæsar" in the chronological order of the plays. It is inevitable that we should set side by side the female figures of these two tragedies, and exhibit the gentle helplessness of Ophelia in the light of the Roman Portia's heroic energy of heart. Such strange love-making as that of Hamlet and Ophelia was surely never known before or since; one silent interview, one distracted or ironical letter, one scene of invective and reproach, real or feigned, and some few ambiguous or indecent speeches—this is the account in brief of all the communications between Ophelia and Hamlet with which we are made directly acquainted. A bar is set between the lovers at the opening of the play, and not one word of trust and confidence is spoken on either side from the beginning to the end. Hamlet's love is poisoned at its source, and Ophelia has not courage to press forward and discover where and how he ails; she has nothing better to bring to Hamlet's aid than piteous little appeals to heaven. It was Helena, not Ophelia, who uttered the words—

> "Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie
> Which we ascribe to heaven; the fated sky
> Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull
> Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull."

Portia, created by Shakspere from Plutarch's record at about the same date as Ophelia, is really as feminine, as sensitive to anxiety and pain for those she loves, as the ill-starred Danish maiden; she too, and with a slighter cause than Ophelia, goes distracted and does herself to death—a death by fire, not the piteous, musical death of Ophelia. Portia is as finely strung as any of Shakspere's heroines, but she is Cato's daughter and Brutus' wife. With an irresistible appeal to Brutus—not to heaven—she urges her wifely right to share the purposes and the cares of her husband. Let Ophelia keep for epitaph her brother's words, "sweet rose of May"—a rose borne helplessly down the stream of fate, and muddied at the close; it is inexpressibly piteous. But if we would be proud, not pitiful, let us turn to Portia, Shakspere's ideal of Stoic virtue enshrined within a woman's frailty, and let us inscribe to her memory the words of Brutus—

> O ye gods
> Render me worthy of this noble wife."

Portia, the Roman wife, represents one aspect of ideal womanhood in ancient Rome; Volumnia, the Roman mother, completes the ideal. She were a fit wife for Hercules; "in anger, Juno-like." She is indeed like mother Rome herself, as grand, as imperious, as proud of her valiant son. And yet if we compare her action throughout the play with that of Corio-

lanus we shall perceive how truly she, like Portia, is first a woman, and only in the second place a Roman mother. With all her haughtiness she has the woman's tact, which Coriolanus lacks, and she instructs him, but in vain, to seem gracious even to the plebeians when it is his interest to conciliate them—

> "I have a heart as little apt as yours,
> But yet a brain, that leads my use of anger
> To better vantage."

The great speech by which she subdues her son and saves her city is in the main a transcript from Plutarch, but there are two or three lines altogether of Shakspere's invention, which are put, as Mrs Jameson has noticed, with admirable effect into a mother's mouth, and that of such a mother as Volumnia—

> "There is no man in the world
> More bound to his mother; yet here he lets me prate
> Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life
> Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy:
> *When she (poor hen!) fond of no second brood,*
> *Has cluck'd thee to the wars, and safely home,*
> *Laden with honour.*"

The "poor hen" is Shakspere's thought, or shall we not rather say Volumnia's, and omitted by a mistake of Plutarch?

The great figures of the tragedies, all so familiar to us, admit of no grouping or arrangement, for each is a separate full-length study, and each must be gazed at singly and for a sufficient time. These are saviours and martyrs, or else the destroyers of life; Cordelia, the martyr and patron saint of filial truth and devotion, Desdemona, the wife who enters Paradise with a sacred lie upon her

lips; and over against these the she-wolves Goneril and Regan; and Lady Macbeth, whose delicate and desperate womanhood is so finely contrasted with the coarser strength and duller conscience of her husband. Apart from the rest, and more wonderful than any other of Shakspere's heroines, stands Cleopatra—

> "That southern beam,
> The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands."

From an historical point of view we may say, that as Portia and Volumnia represent the virtue and the majesty of Roman womanhood, so Cleopatra represents the sensuous witchery of the East sapping in upon Roman manliness and laying it low. But it is an error to view Cleopatra as representative of an epoch, a class, or an influence; she is Cleopatra, and that is enough; an individual who herself constitutes a whole species; an Eastern star, with none other like it, and ruling the destinies of the lords of the earth.

Of these it is enough to record the mere names, and to let each name bring its own associations. But before ending I must say a word of the contrasted types of womanhood which appear in the latest plays of Shakspere, some perhaps dreamed of as he wandered among the woods and fields around Stratford, or on the banks of the Avon after his return home from the life of distraction and toil in the great city. Shakspere had known trial and sorrow, and had conquered them. And now out of his deep experience and his clarified vision of life he creates the figures of great sufferers—Hermione, Queen Katherine, who conquer by patience,

fortitude, a spirit of justice and long-suffering; and in contrast with these he imagines exquisite figures of children transfigured, as it were, in the radiance of his own wide and calm sunset—Perdita, Miranda—children who have known no sorrow, and over whose happiness, the loveliest and the frailest of things, Shakspere bows with pathetic sympathy, and some of that passion which Shelley describes so accurately—

> "The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow."

And with what rare felicity Shakspere varies the common type in his two girl-lovers—Perdita, with the air of the fields around her, shepherdess queen of curds and cream, "the prettiest low-born lass that ever ran on the greensward," lover of flowers and of all pastoral pleasures; Miranda, the child of wonder, breathing the sea-air of the enchanted island, not nurtured like Perdita among the lads and lasses of the country-side, but instructed by a wonder-working sage, and waited on by a spirit of the air and the hag-born monster, Caliban. Both maidens are flower-like in their delicacy and their fresh beauty—Perdita, a blossom of the inland meadow lands; Miranda, a more wonderful flower of the foam of the sea.

Of all the daughters of his imagination, which did Shakspere love the best? Perhaps we shall not err if we say one of the latest-born of them all, our English Imogen. And what most clearly shows us how Shakspere loved Imogen is this—he has given her faults, and has made them exquisite, so that we love her

better for their sake. No one has so quick and keen a sensibility to whatever pains and to whatever gladdens as she. To her a word is a blow; and as she is quick in her sensibility, so she is quick in her perceptions, piercing at once through the Queen's false show of friendship; quick in her contempt for what is unworthy, as for all professions of love from the clown-prince, Cloten; quick in her resentment, as when she discovers the unjust suspicions of Posthumus. Wronged she is indeed by her husband, but in her haste she too grows unjust; yet she is dearer to us for the sake of this injustice, proceeding as it does from the sensitiveness of her love. It is she to whom a word is a blow, who actually receives a buffet from her husband's hand; but for Imogen it is a blessed stroke, since it is the evidence of his loyalty and zeal on her behalf. In a moment he is forgiven, and her arms are round his neck.

Shakspere made so many perfect women unhappy that he owed us some *amende*. And he has made that *amende* by letting us see one perfect woman supremely happy. Shall our last glance at Shakspere's plays show us Florizel at the rustic merry-making receiving blossoms from the hands of Perdita? or Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess in Prospero's cave, and winning one a king and one a queen, while the happy fathers gaze in from the entrance of the cave? We can see a more delightful sight than these—Imogen with her arms around the neck of Posthumus, while she puts an edge upon her joy by the playful challenge and mock reproach—

"Why did you throw your wedded lady from you?
Think that you are upon a rock, and now
Throw me again;"

and he responds—

"Hang there like fruit, my soul,
Till the tree die."

We shall find in all Shakspere no more blissful creatures than these two.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

Vieni, a veder Montecchi e Capelletti.
Dante, Purg., Canto VI.

I.

On a day of some year unknown, early in the sixteenth century, Luigi da Porto, a young cavalry officer in the service of the Venetian Republic, was riding, as he tells us, along the lonely road between Gradisca and Udine, in the pleasant country of Friuli. Two of his attendants had been left far behind, but one followed closer, his favourite archer, Peregrino, a man of fifty, handsome of face, courageous, skilled in the use of his bow, skilled also, like most of his fellow-townsmen of Verona, in use of his tongue, and very learned in tales of love and lovers. The young man, lost in his own thoughts, was musing sadly on the cruelty of fortune, which had given his heart to one who would not give hers in exchange, when the voice of Peregrino sounded in his ears. "Do you wish to live always a wretched life because a beautiful, cruel, and fickle one loves you but little? In your profession, Master mine, it is very unbecoming to stay long in the prison of love; so sad are almost all the ends to which love leads us that to follow him is dangerous. In proof of which, and to shorten the tedium of the way, I will, should it please you, relate a story of what happened in my country, in which you will hear

how two noble lovers were led to a very sad and pitiful death."

The story of Romeo and Juliet, which Peregrino, the Veronese archer, told to the jingling of bridle-reins, if not a tradition of real events, is probably a refinement on an older tale found among the *Novelle* of Masuccio Salernitano, printed at Naples in 1476. Masuccio, of whose life little is known, calls God to witness that the tales of his recital are not vain fictions, but true passages of history. In Siena lived a young man of good family named Mariotto Mignanelli, who loved a citizen's daughter, Giannozza Saraceni, and was loved by her in return. Fate being opposed to them, they cannot avow their love, but are secretly married by an Augustine monk. After some time Mariotto quarrels with a citizen of note, whom he has the misfortune to kill with the blow of a stick. He is condemned to perpetual exile, and, after a sorrowful parting from his beloved, flies to Alexandria, in which city his uncle is a wealthy merchant. Upon Mariotto's departure the father of Giannozza urges her to accept the hand of a suitor whom he has provided, and she, like Juliet in her distress, turns to the friar, who prepares a powder which, dissolved in water, shall cast her into a three days' slumber resembling death. Having first despatched a messenger to inform her husband, she drinks the draught, and is buried in the church of St Augustine. At night the friar delivers her from the tomb, and bears her, still unconscious, to his dwelling. Here she comes to herself at the appointed time, and disguised as a monk hastens on board a ship bound for

Alexandria. Meanwhile her messenger has been captured by pirates, and tidings of the sudden deaths of Giannozza and of her father (who had really died of grief for his daughter's loss) reach Mariotto. Weary of life, he comes to Siena, disguised as a pilgrim, hurries to the church where he believes that his lady's body lies, and flings himself upon her grave. While endeavouring to open the tomb he is discovered by the sacristan, who takes him for a thief. He is seized, identified as the banished Mariotto, on the rack confesses the entire truth, and, notwithstanding the general sympathy, and especially that of all women, is condemned and beheaded. Giannozza, having arrived at Alexandria, learns to her dismay that her husband, on hearing of her reported death, has returned to Siena; she instantly follows him, only to be informed of his execution. She strives to hide her grief in a convent, and there in a short time dies of a broken heart.*

This tale of the "Neapolitan Boccaccio" is comparatively rude—in some features almost savage. Love is here in its might, and death in its terror; but beauty has not come to lift the tale out of the melodramatic and make it a symbol of what is most piteous and most august in human existence—the strict bounds which life sets to our purest and most ardent desires, and the boundlessness of those desires which choose rather to abandon this world than to be untrue to themselves.

* "Con interno dolore e sanguinose lacrime con poco cibo e niente dormire." I have followed the analyses of Masuccio's novel in Dr Schulze's article, Shakespeare-Jahrbuch, XI., Simrock's "Die Quellen des Shakspeare," and Daniel's Preface to Brooke and Painter (New Shakspere Society, 1878).

What, then, does Masuccio's novel need? It needs that the youth and maiden sacrificed to love should be crowned and garlanded with all that makes life lovely; that their fate should come upon them at first with a terror of great joy; that they should be swept suddenly and irresistibly into the mid stream of violent delight; that the obstacle to their happiness should be of no slight or casual kind, but broad-based on an old foundation; that hate should thus stand frowning over against love; that no hazardous wanderings from Italy to Egypt should have place in the story, but that by trivial accident the purpose of destiny should be brought about; finally, that the death of one lover should be self-sought and deliberate—outcome of desperate error—and that the other should be fleet to pursue the lost one through the gates of the grave in a rapture of anguish and of desire.

II.

All that was needed to Masuccio's tale Shakspere accomplished; but before the tale reached Shakspere it had been in large measure ennobled and refined. Da Porto's version (1530-35) is sixty years later in date than that of Masuccio. In Italy, says Mr Symonds, "the key-note of the Renaissance was struck by the *Novella*, as in England by the drama." The tragic simplicity of Masuccio's tale gives place in Da Porto's "Romeo and Juliet" to the heightened effects of an artist; it is a prose poem of the Italian Renaissance. Within a narrow compass it brings together splendour and gloom, joy and misery; the banquet-hall, the bridal-

chamber, and the burial-vault; while over all are cast a grace of manners, a bloom of southern life, which the earlier *Novella* lacks. In almost every essential, and in various details, Da Porto's story agrees with Shakspere's play.* It is early in the thirteenth century, the time of Bartolomeo della Scala, Prince of Verona—the Escalus of Shakspere. The two rival houses, Capelletti and Montecchi, wearied with continual strife, are now at length almost pacified. In the Carnival season, the head of the Capelletti, Messer Antonio, gives many entertainments night and day, to one of which, on a certain night, came in pursuit of his mistress a young man of the house of Montecchi, masked, and wearing the dress of a nymph. Having removed his mask all are amazed at his comeliness, and the eyes of the daughter of the house—who is herself "of supernatural beauty, courageous, and very charming"—encounter with those of the stranger. In the torch dance the hands of the two touch, and words of love are whispered. From that evening each thinks only of the other, and sometimes at church, sometimes at a window, Romeo catches sight of his beloved. Often at peril of his life he walks before her house, or climbs to her balcony, now while the moon shines bright, and again when the winter snow is falling thick. Considering the danger to which he is exposed, Giulietta consents to be his wife, and Friar Lorenzo of St Francis, "a great philosopher, who tried many experiments as well in natural as

* In what follows I have used "The Original Story of Romeo and Juliet, Italian text with English translation," by G. Pace-Sanfelice, 1868.

magical things," plans, in order to gratify his patron Romeo, and hoping to reconcile the two families, how to assist their meeting and unite them in wedlock. After their secret marriage some happy bridal nights go by, when once again the smouldering hate of the houses flames forth, and in a street quarrel Romeo, although at first careful "out of regard for his lady not to hurt any of her family," driven to desperation, rushes on Tebaldo Capelletti, strikes him dead at a blow, and puts his followers to flight. The sentence of banishment follows, as in Shakspere's play, and in the confessional at the convent a sorrowful meeting of wife and husband takes place. Giulietta implores to be allowed to accompany Romeo as a page; she will cut off her hair; no one can be a more faithful servant. But Romeo will take her from her father's home only as his wedded lady; he trusts that ere long the Prince's pardon may be obtained, and peace be concluded between their kinsfolk. Half dead with grief, he reaches Mantua; worn with weeping, she abides in her Veronese palazzo. Her mother now grows anxious at sight of her tears and pallid face, and old Capulet and his wife, taking counsel together, guess that Giulietta, who on St Euphemia's Day last completed her eighteenth year, is pining in the loneliness of maidenhood; let them find for her a husband and once more she will be cheerful. An aspirant husband is speedily found in the young Count of Lodrone, and when Giulietta vehemently opposes the marriage, her father flies into a rage, trying to overwhelm her constancy with threats. In extreme perplexity she turns to Friar Lorenzo for aid: "Give me as

much poison as will free me from so great sorrow, and Romeo from so great shame; if you deny this I shall, with more pain on my part, and grief on his, plunge a dagger into my breast." For a desperate case, the good padre has in store a desperate remedy; she is too young and beautiful to die; but let her drink this powder, and she shall enter into a death-like sleep for eight-and-twenty hours; the tomb of the Capelletti is hard by the Franciscan church; he will convey her from the tomb, give her shelter in his cell, and accompany her, disguised under a friar's hood, to Mantua. "'But tell me, will you not be afraid of the corpse of your cousin Tebaldo, who was lately buried there?' The young lady, now quite joyful, said: 'Father, if I through such means was sure of going to meet Romeo, I would without fear even pass through the infernal regions.'" Giulietta returns home joyful; some unremembered sin it was that had saddened her heart, but the best confessor in the world has brought her peace of mind. She is sent by her father to a country house, where preparations for the nuptials have been going forward; she retires for the night, undresses, rises about four in the morning, calls her chambermaid, and in her presence and that of an aunt drinks the potion, with the words, "My father shall not certainly, if I can help it, marry me against my will." The women, who are dull of apprehension, fail to understand what she has done, and they sleep again. Giulietta dresses and once more lies down, composing herself as if she were at the point of dying, and crossing her hands upon her breast.

In the morning loud are the outcries and lamentations

of the women, especially of the chambermaid—almost a sister to Giulietta—on finding the bride a corpse. The physician is summoned and pronounces it death. Her mother is distracted with grief. The body, brought back to Verona, is laid in the tomb with very honourable and great obsequies. Meanwhile, Friar Lorenzo has despatched by a brother of his order a letter which Giulietta had written explaining all that was to happen; but Romeo cannot be found. Found he is, however, by Giulietta's serving-man, Pietro, who has hastened from Verona with tidings of the lady's death. "Upon hearing this, Romeo, pale and half dead, drew his sword and was going to kill himself, but, being prevented by many persons, said, 'The period of my life at any rate cannot be far off, since the better part of it exists no longer.' Dismissing Pietro, disguising himself in the garb of a peasant, and taking a phial of serpent's water in his sleeve, he comes to Verona on the night after that on which his mistress has been buried. The lid of the tomb yields to his efforts, and he enters, carrying with him a dark lantern. There lies Giulietta amidst the bones of many generations; tears and cries break from Romeo, while he kisses her eyes, her mouth, her breast; then plucking the serpent-water from his sleeve, he drains the phial, and once more turns to embrace his bride."

Here the tale of Da Porto varies with tragic power from that version of it which Shakspere has made familiar to us. While Romeo's arms are round his wife, the cold about her heart is conquered, she stirs, and "coming to herself, after a deep sigh, she said,

'Alas, where am I? who embraces me? miserable me! who kisses me?'" For a moment she fears it is Friar Lorenzo who has played her false; then the voice of Romeo fills her sense of hearing, and she would also fill with his presence her sense of sight—"pushing him a little from her, and looking him in the face, she recollected him, and, embracing him, kissed him a thousand times, saying, 'What madness has induced you to come here, running into such dangers?'" A dialogue which Shakspere might have re-created and made as full of lyric beauty as that between the lovers in the moonlit garden, or that between the new husband and new wife on the balcony at break of day, takes place between Romeo, who feels the ice of death in all his limbs, and Giulietta, in whom the tide of life has begun again to surge. "'If ever my love and faith were dear to you, live, if only to think on him who dies for your sake before your eyes.' To which the lady answered, 'Since you die on account of my feigned death, what ought not I to do for your real one?' and having pronounced these words she fell down fainting. Coming afterwards to herself, she miserably received in her beautiful mouth the last sighs of her dear lover, whose death was approaching with great strides." But now the Friar, who has observed with alarm a light within the tomb, hurries in, and discovers with horror what has taken place. With a bitter cry of "Romeo!" he rouses the almost extinguished consciousness of the unhappy youth; once more the languid eyes open, just as dawn is about to touch the world, then close for ever, and "death creeping through all his limbs, he twisted himself all over,

and ended his life with a short sigh." Lorenzo turns to Giulietta, to bring her such comfort as may be; for her the cloister shall be a refuge, wherein she may pray for Romeo and for herself. But love has swifter solace than this for her stricken heart. "'What can I do,' she cried, 'without thee, my sweet lord? and what else remains for me to perform, but to die and follow thee?' Having said this, and deeply musing on her great misfortune, and the death of her dear lover, resolving to live no longer, she drew in her breath, retained it a great while, and then with a loud scream fell dead upon her lover's body."

The Friar, discovered in the tomb by officers of the podestà, and brought before the Prince, relates, after some evasions, the sorrowful series of events. By order of Della Scala the bodies of Romeo and Giulietta are taken from the tomb and placed on two carpets in the church of St Francis. There over the dead children the weeping kinsfolk forget their long enmity and embrace. "And the Prince having ordered a fair monument, on which was engraven the cause of their death, the two dead lovers were buried with very great and solemn funeral pomp, lamented and accompanied by the Prince, their kindred, and all the city."

III.

The story told by the archer Peregrino to Da Porto now took wing and wandered hither and thither. A Dominican monk, Matteo Bandello, the descendant of a noble Lombard house, on whom a French bishopric was conferred by Henri II., took up the tale, re-handled

it, and included it among his somewhat unclerical *Novelle*, which appeared at Lucca in 1554. Five years later it passed the Alps—a version of Bandello's *Novella*, with variations and additions, being given to French readers by Pierre Boaistuau among his "Histoires Tragiques."* In 1562, Arthur Brooke produced the English poem, "The Tragicall History of Romeus and Iuliet," on which Shakspere founded his tragedy. Brooke speaks of having seen "the same argument lately set forth on stage;" no such drama of early Elizabethan days survives; rude indeed must have been the attempt of any playwright in England of 1562. Again five years, and Boaistuau's French paraphrase of Bandello was translated into English prose by William Painter for his "Palace of Pleasure;" this also Shakspere consulted. In Italy before the close of the sixteenth century the legend had been versified in *ottava rima*, professedly by a noble lady of Verona naming herself "Clitia"—really, it is supposed, by Gherardo Bolderi; it had been dramatised by the blind poet and actor Luigi Groto, with scene and time and names of persons changed; it had been recorded as grave matter of history by De la Corte, who states that he had many times seen the tomb or sarcophagus of the lovers, then used as a washing-trough, at the well of the orphanage of St Francis, "and," says he, "discussing this matter with the Cavalier Gerardo Boldiero, my uncle, he showed me, beside the aforesaid sepulchre, a place in the wall,

* An early French form of the story is found in the dedication to a translation of Boccaccio's "Philocopo," by Adrian Sevin, 1542, with such outlandish names for the personages as Karilio Humdrum, Halquadrich, Harriaquach, &c.

on that side next the Rev. Capucini Fathers', from whence, as he assured me, he had been given to understand, this sepulchre, containing bones and ashes, had been taken many years before." *

In Bandello's hands the story acquired many resemblances to the Shaksperian form which are wanting in Da Porto. He dwells on Romeo's amorous fancy for a hard-hearted mistress—Shakspere's Rosaline—to which Da Porto only alludes. An elder friend—Shakspere's Benvolio—advises the enamoured youth to "examine other beauties," and to subdue his passion. Romeo enters Capulet's mansion disguised, but no longer as a nymph. The Count of Lodrone is now first known as Paris. The ladder of ropes is now first mentioned. The sleeping-potion is taken by Juliet, not in presence of her chamber-maid and aunt, but in solitude. Friar Lorenzo's messenger to Mantua fails to deliver the letter because he is detained in a house suspected of being stricken with plague. In particular we owe to Bandello the figure of the nurse, not Shakspere's humorous creation, but a friendly old woman, who very willingly plays her part of go-between for the lovers. One more development, and all the materials of Shakspere's play are in full formation. From Bandello's mention of one Spolentino of Mantua, from whom Romeo procures the poison, Pierre Boaistuau creates the episode of the Apothecary, and it is also to this French refashioner of the story that we must trace the Shaksperian close; with him, Juliet

* Daniel's Introduction to the New Shakspere Society's "Originals and Analogues, Part I." It is by no means certain that the story of Romeo and Juliet has not an historical foundation.

does not wake from her sleep until Romeo has ceased to breathe; and she dies, as in our tragedy, not in a paroxysm of grief, but by her own hand, armed with her husband's dagger.

IV.

Vieni a veder Montecchi e Capelletti—"Come, see the Montagues and Capulets." Will the reader consent to leave Italy, and before we see them in England, view the rival houses and their children as they show themselves in Spain of the seventeenth century, and in France a century later? Some eighteen months before the birth of Shakspere in his little Warwickshire town, the most prolific of Spanish dramatists, Lope de Vega, was born at Madrid. When the Great Armada hung upon the southern coast of England in 1588, Lope, a disconsolate lover, was aboard one of the tall ships, with his musket by his side, having for wadding a plentiful supply of the verses he had written in his hard-hearted lady's praise. Among Lope's cloak and sword dramas—"Comedias de Capa y Espada"—is one entitled "Castelvines y Monteses," in which the tragic story of the Veronese lovers undergoes a strange transformation.* As with all of its author's productions for the stage, the plot is a bright tangle of incidents, skilfully ravelled and skilfully unravelled; as with all, the

* For what follows I have used the reprint of "Los Bandos de Verona," and "Castelvines y Monteses," in one volume (Paris, 1839), and Mr F. W. Cosens' privately-printed translation, 1869. In Furness's edition of "Romeo and Juliet," and in the Introduction to Fr.-Victor Hugo's translation of Shakspere's play, analyses of Lope's comedy will be found.

characters are subordinate to the incidents, and of course among the characters appear "the *primer galan*, or hero, all love and honour and jealousy; the *dama*, or heroine, no less loving and jealous . . .; the *barba*, or old man and father, ready to cover the stage with blood if the lover has even been seen in the house of the heroine;" and the inevitable *gracioso*, or droll, whose love adventures parody those of his master. Lope's drama, though it keeps upon the mere surface of life as compared with Shakspere's tragedy, is not without a genuine charm; it never flags for a moment; its movement is bright as well as rapid; the stage is always bustling with animated figures; and there is poetry enough in it to lift the play above mere melodrama or spectacle. Altogether this bright southern flower has a place of its own in the garden of art; not like Shakspere's red lily, flowering alone upon a grave, but amid its fellows in some gay parterre blown over by a sunlit breeze.

The curtain rises upon a street in Verona; we see the palace of Antonio, chief of the Castelvines, lit up for revelry. Without stand Roselo (Romeo), his comrade Anselmo, and Roselo's servant Marin, the merry-man or *gracioso*. The love of frolic comes strong upon Roselo, and even overpowers the prudent counsel of Anselmo; in spite of the danger of entering their enemy's doors, the two youths, masked and cloaked, followed close by their attendant, pass into the hall of feasting and music. The scene changes; it is the garden of Antonio's house, where, escaped from the heat indoors, masked cavaliers and ladies rest or wander to and fro, while musicians finger

their instruments. As Roselo enters, Julia, the daughter of the house, is seated listening to the gallant speeches of her cousin Otavio. Her beauty on the instant transports the new comer, and while standing at gaze he is reckless enough to remove his mask. Julia's father can hardly be restrained from laying violent hands on his uninvited guest, but the lady herself, struck with his noble grace, whispers to her cousin Dorotea—

> "If ever Love in masquerade should come,
> And so disguise himself and yet peep forth,
> Methinks 'twould be with such a form and face."

Presently the youth grows bold, and seats himself by Julia's side. On the other side is Otavio, and to him Julia turns her face, but, skilled in love's cunning, interprets all her encouraging words by a pressure of Roselo's hand, on which she even contrives adroitly to slip her ring. Discovering through her maid Celia, after his departure, that Roselo belongs to the rival house, she grows for a moment prudent, and is about to despatch Celia to retract her assignation for a later hour, and to reclaim her gage of love. But a lover's resolutions are not constant in cruelty, and Celia actually leaves her mistress to summon Roselo to her presence. The fête is over; Julia is in the orchard with only her cousin and her maid. The troublesome cousin is speedily dismissed to lull her father to sleep, and as he disappears, Roselo is seen leaping from the orchard wall, scaled with a ladder of rope. Julia tries for a moment to stem the advancing tide of passion, but her resistance is swept away by her lover's importunities, and with hurried words respecting marriage and Roselo's friend

the holy friar, they part upon the sound of approaching footsteps.

The curtain falls, and before it rises again Julia and Roselo have been wedded by the good Friar Aurelio. The scene is the open space outside a church, and there is stir and indignation within and without, for two Monteses have insolently plucked away the chair of the Castelvine damsel, Dorotea. Her father, Teobaldo, incites Otavio, his son, who has accompanied Julia to church, to revenge the insult. Roselo passes by, telling his friend the news of his fortunate love, when a cry is heard from the church, and Roselo knows that it is his father's voice. Immediately parties of the Castelvines and the Monteses issue from the porch, prepared for furious fight, Roselo, the new-wedded husband, intervenes as a peacemaker, but in vain; the furious Otavio tilts at him with his rapier, and in self-defence Roselo strikes him dead. And now the Duke of Verona appears, inquiring into the cause of this bloody fray. All who are present bear witness in favour of Roselo, but the decree goes forth against him—not death, but banishment,* the Duke in the meantime inviting him to his palace as an honoured guest.

Again the scene is Antonio's orchard, where a sorrowful parting takes place between Roselo and Julia. The passionate dialogue of hero and heroine has its comic counterpart in that of man-servant and maid. Roselo offers his breast if Julia choose to strike with the poig-

* Lope de Vega was himself banished from Madrid and separated from his wife, who remained behind, in consequence of a duel in which he wounded his adversary.

nard and avenge her cousin's death; the *gracioso*, Marin, in like manner offers his double-quilted doublet for the stroke of Celia. Julia is willing to abandon all things for her husband's love; and how can the waiting-maid care whether her linen washes white, or the glass for holding preserves be cracked, while her Marin is far away? Before pathos or play has wearied of itself, the voice of old Antonio is heard above the plash of the fountain, and Roselo with his attendant beats a retreat. Her father finds Julia weeping, but she rises to the occasion, asserting that her tears are for the dead Otavio, whom she had looked on as a husband. A husband shall be found for her, thinks Antonio, and that forthwith—there is Count Paris who will gladly accept her as his bride; let a messenger be despatched to overtake him on the way to Ferrara, and assure him that his suit for Julia is granted.

The scene shifts, and we are on the road to Ferrara. Count Paris has fallen in with Roselo, and although a friend to the Castelvines, he offers the banished youth his good-fellowship and protection against the band of assassins hired by his enemies to waylay him. While they converse, Antonio's messenger approaches bearing a missive to the Count, who, knowing nothing of Roselo's sudden wooing and wedding, announces joyously that he is the chosen son-in-law of Julia's father, and must turn back to Verona. Roselo is silent with a trembling lip, and unable to bid adieu, hurries forward to Ferrara, filled with indignation against the perfidious heart of woman. Meanwhile, the faithful Julia is suffering persecution at her father's hands; driven to desperate

straits, she resolves on death; sends secretly to the Friar for a draught of poison; then assumes a joyful bearing and gives her consent to be the wife of Paris. But when her maid enters with the phial, she half distrusts the old man's purpose—may it not be some love-philtre that he has brewed? She drinks, and is soon convinced that the drug is poison, for torpor and chill seem to creep through all her veins.

"*Julia.* Oh, sad end to all my love!
And yet I die consoled—we 'll meet above.
Celia, write tenderly to my husband when I'm dead;
And—and—
Celia. What says my Julia—mistress dear?
Julia. I know not what I spake. 'Tis sad to die
So young."

To Roselo, in Ferrara, tidings are brought by his friend Anselmo of the supposed death and the burial of his wife; but, happier than Shakspere's Romeo, Roselo learns at the same time that this seeming death is only a slumber at the heart; his part is to hasten to the tomb and bear his beloved away with him to France or Spain. A new scene discloses the vault beneath the church of Verona. Julia awakes, and after a sense of vague horror, remembers the Friar's draught, and guesses her grim whereabouts. A flicker of light approaches, it is Roselo who enters with his attendant; Julia shrinks aside in sudden alarm, now fearing the unknown living more than the dead. Marin, in mortal terror among the coffin-lids and death's heads, stumbles and extinguishes the light, whereupon ensues a "tedious brief scene of very tragical mirth," the *gracioso* playing clown among the dead men with lively fooling. At length a

recognition takes place between wife and husband, and they leave the chamber of death to hide themselves for awhile disguised as peasants upon a farm belonging to Julia's father.

To this same farm comes Julia's father, who, childless and heirless, has resolved to marry his niece Dorotea, and while waiting for a dispensation for this marriage from the Pope, chooses to reside in quiet upon his country estate. Scarcely has he entered the farmhouse when he stands awe-struck to hear the voice of his dead Julia. That quick-witted young lady, hidden in an upper chamber, profits by the opportunity to lecture her father, as if from the spirit-world, on his cruelty, which, she declares, has caused her death; nor does she end until the old man binds himself by a solemn vow to forgive her husband Roselo, and receive him as a son. No sooner is the vow uttered than Roselo, Anselmo, and Marin, still in peasants' attire, are brought in as prisoners by the fierce old Castelvine, Teobaldo, now exulting in the hope of vengeance for his slaughtered Otavio. But the head of the house has pledged his word to his dead daughter to protect and befriend Roselo; he will go farther—he will even resign his intended bride, Dorotea, in Roselo's favour. At this point the spirit-wife can play her ghostly part no longer—she darts in with a cry to her husband—

> "No, not so; wouldst thou, traitor,
> Wed two wives?"

Explanation of the mystery of Julia, now alive from the dead, is soon given, and the drama ends with the union of the lovers sanctioned and approved, to perfect the joy

of which, Roselo's friend, Anselmo, wins Dorotea for his bride, while the serving-man Marin duly pairs off with the waiting-woman Celia.

"*Antonio.* Enough, let's join their hands.
Marin. And I, with all my virtues, where
Shall I find one my cares to share;
The fright I had upon that awful day
When I dragged forth from death yon mortal clay.
Julia. Celia is thine; a thousand ducats too.
Roselo. Good senators, here, I pray 'tis understood
The Castelvines ends in happiest moods."

Lope, says François-Victor Hugo, has parodied—Shakspere has dramatised the Italian legend. But this is hardly just to Lope. We feel at least a piquant surprise on seeing how readily the tragic tale, with a few turns from the hands of a skilful playwright, transforms itself to a lively and not ungraceful comedy of the cloak and sword.

V.-

There is a second Spanish play with the same subject. Francisco de Rojas y Zorrilla succeeded Lope as a writer for the stage. In "Los Bandos de Verona" the writer departs even farther from the Italian original than Lope had cared to stray.* In this new variation on the theme, Romeo has a sister, Elena, the unhappy wife of Count Paris, who since the outbreak of enmity between the houses slights her as a Montague, and desires to obtain a divorce in order that he may be free to wed his wife's friend, Julia. Romeo has first seen his beloved

* Mr F. W. Cosens, to whom Shakspere students are much indebted, has also Englished this drama in a beautiful volume printed for private distribution, 1874.

not at ball or banquet, nor in the festal garden of Antonio, but alone in her chamber, to which he had penetrated sword in hand, seeking her father's life with a maniac's fury, only to be abashed, subdued, and stricken to the heart by her beauty shining through tears. The incident of the sleeping-potion is strangely altered. Old Capulet urges his daughter to a marriage with Paris or with his own nephew, Andrés; let her choose which she pleases; but if she rejects these for Romeo's sake, her choice must be between poignard and poison now lying upon the table. Julia, before her father can step between, has rushed forward, seized the phial, and drained its contents. Happily the servant commissioned to procure the poison, fearing that it may be intended for Julia's waiting-woman, who is dear to him, has had it prepared as a simple sleeping-draught. In the escape from the vault, by a series of misadventures and cross-purposes happening in the darkened church, Romeo carries off his sister Elena in place of Julia, while Julia clings to the cloak of her cousin Andrés. Romeo is hunted through a wood by the enraged Capulets, and at dawn in the same wood Rojas's Julia, like Lope's, startles her father as an apparition from the grave. She is immured in a fortress garrisoned by the Capulet faction, which is besieged by Romeo and the Montagues; the *gracioso*, who has done the inevitable fooling throughout the play, valiantly finding his way to the rear:

> "I'll sheathe my blade,
> And leave, to such as like, the cold-steel trade.
> It is a selfish world, when all is done,
> I'll stay behind; take care of number one."

The play concludes with wedding-bells in prospect for the lovers, and with a reconciliation between Count Paris and his wife. The skilful intrigue, the graceful movement and the bright poetry of Lope's comedy are conspicuous by their absence when we pass from "Castelvines y Monteses" to "Los Bandos de Verona."

VI.

"I shall never forget," wrote the French poet Campenon, who died an old man in 1843, "I shall never forget how, one cold day of January, when I went to Versailles to visit Ducis, I found him in his bedroom, mounted on a chair, and intent on arranging with a certain pomp around the head of the English Æschylus, a huge bunch of box, which had been brought to him. 'I shall be at your service presently,' he said, as I entered, but without changing his position. Observing that I was a little surprised at the attitude in which I found him, he went on, 'You are not aware that it is the eve of Saint William, patron saint of my Shakspere.' Then, leaning on my shoulder to get down, and having consulted me as to the effect of his bouquet —the only one, doubtless, which the winter season yielded—'My friend,' added he, with an expression of countenance which I yet remember, 'the ancients crowned with flowers the streams from which they drew.'"

Hard words have been spoken by Shaksperian enthusiasts of his eighteenth-century adapter, Ducis, and not altogether without reason; but Ducis was himself a Shaksperian enthusiast. His poetic manner betrays

his age, an age before the Romantic movement had attacked the conventions of the old French theatre, and when the words *nature, virtue,* and *liberty,* inspired with a kind of supernatural power by Rousseau, were those most certain to call forth the applause of the parterre. But Ducis himself stood apart from his age; there was something rare and original in his nature; a grave majesty in his very countenance. Among philosophers he remained religious; in the neighbourhood of a Court he remained simple and almost austere. "In my poetic scale," he wrote, "are the notes of the flute and of the thunder; how do these go together? I myself do not very well know, but I know that it is so.' A soul tragic yet tender; with something in it of the Carthusian—says Sainte-Beuve—and also something gentler and better. To have foiled Bonaparte is Ducis' peculiar distinction; no bribe—not the Senate, not the Cross of the Legion—could seduce him from allegiance to his ideals. "I am," said he, "a Catholic, a poet, a republican, a solitary."

Ducis was thirty-six years old when he adapted "Hamlet" to the French stage. It had a brilliant success. Three years later, in 1772, his "Roméo et Juliette" was represented by the Royal Comedians. A second success was achieved, as brilliant as the first. But the "Hamlet" of Ducis is not Shakspere's "Hamlet," and his "Roméo et Juliette" loses the unity of motive which characterises Shakspere's tragedy; the plot is altered and complicated; old Montague becomes a chief person, as important and interesting as either of the lovers; "the cry of paternal tenderness,"

as Ducis expresses it, is heard above the cry of the young, passionate hearts; and a moral lesson directed against the spirit of revenge is in new ways illustrated by the story. "I need not enlarge," says Ducis, "on my obligations to Shakspere and to Dante." With the theme of the English dramatist he links the ghastly story of Ugolino found in the thirty-third canto of the "Inferno." His tragic "note of the thunder" overpowers his lyric "note of the flute."

Old Montaigu in Ducis' play has disappeared from Verona for more than twenty years. Retiring from the city to educate his sons in the "virtuous fields," he had been pursued and persecuted by a dreadful uncle of Juliette, now dead, who, by means of hired brigands, robbed Montaigu of his boy Romeo. With four other sons the old man, it is supposed, has taken refuge in some solitude among the Apennines. But what of Romeo? Escaped from his captors, he wandered unknown into Verona, was received into Capulet's house, has grown up from boyhood under the name of Dolvédo by the side of Juliette, who alone knows the secret of his birth; and having given her his love, and won her love in exchange, is returning to Verona, at the moment when the play opens, a famous and victorious leader, bringing with him the standards of the defeated Mantuans.

At the same moment, however, there creeps into Verona an old man, miserable, haggard, desolate, but sustained by one eager hope of revenge. A presentiment of coming evil troubles the joy of Juliette in welcoming home her triumphant Dolvédo. Rumours have

reached Capulet of obscure plots and stirrings among the partisans of Montaigu, and not content with strengthening his house by the approaching marriage of his son Thébaldo, he also urges—tenderly yet firmly—an alliance between his daughter Juliette and Count Paris. Juliette, in presence of her lover. opposes her father's will; and Capulet, witless of the struggle in his daughter's heart, entrusts the cause of Paris to a strangely-chosen pleader—Dolvédo. Is he doomed to see—O heavens!—"an object full of charms" which he has "acquired by his exploits and merited by his tears," borne away by an odious rival? That Juliette is not indifferent her sobs confess; yet her resolve is made—to immolate herself to the State and to obey her father—

"Je m'immole à l'Etat, j'obéis à mon père."

This Juliet is indeed another than the child of Shakspere's imagination.

Tidings are brought to Romeo that his father has entered Verona plotting mischief, and that Paris is now inclining to join the Montaigu faction, and break off his intended marriage with Juliette. Romeo flies to the Duke, entreating his mediation between the heads of the rival houses. Accordingly a meeting in the Duke's presence takes place between Montaigu and Capulet; but the fierce old Montaigu cannot restrain his hatred, and with dark allusion to some hidden horror, breaks into open threats of violence. Away with him, therefore, to prison, where his passion may find time to cool! For Dolvédo-Romeo the position is an agonising one, divided as he is between his love for Juliette and his

loyalty to the old man, so woe-begone, so worn with grief, so solitary. Presently, when Montaigu's retainers rescue their chief from the tower, and are in deadly strife with the Capulets, Romeo's piety as a son carries all before it, and charging the enemy, he plunges his sword into the heart of Thébaldo, Juliette's brother and his own bosom friend.

Once again the Duke intervenes—peace in Verona there must be; above the tombs of their dead the rival chieftains must make a solemn vow of amity. Capulet gladly consents; Montaigu consents in seeming; then, leading Romeo aside, he implores his son not to defeat the one desire of his joyless life—the desire of vengeance. He bears about with him an awful secret; Romeo must know it now. It is the secret of a father whose sons, like Ugolino's, have famished in prison—a father who himself, like Ugolino, has been offered the blood of his children to stay his hunger. Can such an injury as this ever be forgiven? And does Romeo start and shrink back because he is asked to strike a dagger into the breast of Capulet's daughter.

With many entreaties to reconciliation, and some hope that sentiments of honour and magnanimity have subdued the passion for revenge, Romeo leaves the old man. The fifth act opens at the tombs of the Capulets and Montaigus. Juliette has somehow obtained possession of a written order from old Montaigu to his followers, directing them, at the moment when the false vows of peace are being sworn, to fall upon their enemies, and exterminate them. It seems to Juliette that if she offer herself a voluntary sacrifice to the ven-

geance of the Montaigus all may be well for those who survive—with her these dismal family feuds may die. She is alone in the dim place lit by funeral lamps; and alone she drains the poisoned cup, and waits for death. Romeo hurries in buoyed up with the deceitful hope that there is to be reconciliation, and joy for him and his beloved springing up in this place of the dead. From Juliette's lips he learns his father's bloody designs, and her own fatal deed. She implores him to live; but what is life to Romeo in a world of hate without the one being that made life precious? In a moment the faithful sword is plunged into his side, but before the lovers die upon the brink of the grave they hear from one another's lips the sacred names of "husband" and "wife":

> "Arrête, Roméo! la fortune jalouse
> Ne doit point m'empêcher de mourir ton épouse.
> Sur les bords du cercueil, puisqu'il dépend de nous,
> Laisse-moi te donner le nom sacré d'époux.
> Hélas! j'ai bien acquis, dans ce moment suprême,
> Le droit triste et flatteur de me donner moi-même.
> Pour amis, pour témoins, adoptons ces tombeaux,
> Ce marbre pour autel, ces clartés pour flambeaux."

In the closing scene it only remains for the implacable Montaigu to use his poignard with swift execution against his rival at the moment of the oath of peace; then to discover the body of Juliette and pause an instant to gloat over her dying pangs; in that same instant to perceive his slaughtered Romeo by her side, and to fall lifeless—the ruin of his vindictive passion—upon the body of his son.

The haggard old man driven by extreme love for his offspring into extreme hate, fascinated the imagination

of Ducis. With the lovers he concerns himself less. In a preface he offers an apology for presenting suicide upon the stage: "Doubtless it is dangerous to give in the theatre an example of suicide, but I have to depict the consequences of hereditary hatred, and it is on this object alone that I have desired to fix the attention of the spectator." Happily Shakspere was not troubled by such moral scruples, or rather it is happy that Shakspere found through his imagination the laws of a profounder morality than any which Ducis could conceive.

VII.

When Shakspere had attained to about the same age as that of his French adapter, his imagination seized upon the story of an outraged and desolate old man, impotently desiring revenge, and he re-fashioned it with incomparable power. In "King Lear," Shakspere's tragedy of the parental passion, no tale of the love of youth and maiden dissipates the awe and pity which gather around its central theme. So in "Romeo and Juliet," a work of his earlier years, there is but a single motive; it is a young man's tragedy of youth and love and death. Admirable secondary characters there are in the play, but no secondary character is permitted to stand long between us and the persons of the lovers. How Shakspere must have delighted in his own creation of Mercutio; so brilliant a figure had never before irradiated the English stage; but Mercutio was created to appear only three or four times, and then suddenly to be withdrawn as the drama lightens and darkens

towards its close. In the singleness of motive and its ideal treatment dwells the power of the play. What is this, that we should concern ourselves much about it—the love of boy and girl in Verona six centuries ago? Is it not a slender theme for tragedy, which is authorised to deal with "stateliest and most regal argument?" Not so—for Juliet and Romeo come to us in Shakspere's play as envoys from Love himself, emissaries and ambassadors from a suzerain greater than any king or kaiser—

> "Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in chime;
> Love, that is blood within the veins of time;
> That wrought the whole world without stroke of hand;
> Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of land,
> And with the pulse and motion of his breath
> Through the great heart of the earth strikes life and death."

An hour of ecstasy, a few tears, the fleeting joy and pain of a boy and girl in old Verona—these take up a small space in the big history of mankind. True; yet in the frail blossom of their joy we discover the flowering—scarcely so perfect once in a century—of powers which stir through all animated nature in its season of most vivid life; in their pain we discern the shadow of that law which rings the whole of human desire and delight, and rounds it with a sleep.

Much has been written about the moral lesson of the play. We are told that if Romeo were a little less impetuous, and Juliet a little more prudent, all might have gone well with them; they might have been ceremoniously married in St Peter's Church; settlements might have been duly signed and sealed by the relatives; they might have secured a distinguished establishment

in Verona. Alas! they were hare-brained and headlong, and so their violent delights had violent ends. All which is admirably true. In Chaucer's poem, when three eagles stand prepared to do battle for the female seated upon Dame Nature's fist, the goose interposes with wise cackle: "My witte is sharp; let two of the combatants go and choose other mates; if she cannot love this one or that, let him love another."

> "*Lo! here a perfect reason of a goose,*"
> Quoth the Sparhawk.

And, in like manner, when we read the wise moralisings of the excellent Gervinus, perhaps it is enough to exclaim, "Lo! here a perfect reason for a commentator." The example of suicide, again, for setting forth which Ducis apologises, what of it? Surely, it is not right for young people to drink phials of poison, which "if you had the strength of twenty men" would "dispatch you straight." Surely a well-regulated understanding would advise a young widow to choose the cloister before the dagger. True, and a very pretty moral. But while acknowledging all this, may we not be permitted to maintain that a deeper moral lies in the mere presentation of the fact, that for a human being to be charged with high passion of any kind is to forfeit the security of our lower life, and yet that such forfeiture may be justly accepted as the condition of an incalculable gain? May we not bear in mind, also, that vindication of "the lunatic, the lover, and the poet," by Plato, in his "Phædrus": "The sane man is nowhere at all when he enters into rivalry with the madman. . . . The fourth and last kind of madness is

imputed to him who, when he sees the beauty of earth, is transported with the recollection of the true beauty; he would like to fly away, but he cannot; he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward, and careless of the world below; and he is therefore esteemed mad." Not that our passionate young lovers of Verona are in any degree followers of the Platonic philosophy. They are man and maid, with the hot blood "bating in their cheeks"; yet are they "delicate and virgin souls," such as Plato describes, in whom a divine madness, after its kind, "awakens lyrical numbers." And, as to their rash self-slaughter—why does this never offend our moral sense? Why do we never criticise it in the spirit of a serious burgher called to assist upon an inquest, and pondering a verdict of *felo de se?* Why, except that we become aware that the lives of the lovers move in a plane other than the plane of our every-day existence, and that their choice of love together with death rather than of life lapsing back into the loveless round, is a type and emblem of all those heroic sacrifices for an ideal which prove that this earth of ours is not wholly a market or a counting-house.

Less than one little week contains the events from the first meeting of the lovers until their union in the tomb. In Brooke's poem, Shakspere's original, Romeo stands many times beneath Juliet's window before the confession of love in the moonlit night is made, and weeks glide away, after their secret marriage, before the fatal encounter in which Tybalt falls. With Shakspere the lovers are from the outset in the rapids above a cataract. He knew that in seasons of high-wrought

passion life is not measured by the hour-glass or the shadow that creeps across a dial; a moment may contain the sum of years, or may be pregnant with the destiny of all the future. Therefore let us not wonder if the lovers, having looked in each other's eyes for the first time at Capulet's old-accustomed feast on Sunday evening, after one short summer's night, are united in the Friar's cell next day as husband and wife; and again after one, and only one, bridal night of gladness dashed with sorrow, part in the dawn of Tuesday only to meet in that "palace of dim night" where worms are the tire-maidens of the bride-chamber. Five days are merely five days while we rock at our moorings with a gentle motion; they may be long enough, when the gale is up, for a voyage from the sunlit coasts of life to strange islands in an unknown and silent sea.

The scene is in that country which has not yet wholly ceased to be what it was to the Elizabethan imagination, the land of passion and romance. It is Italy; the moonlit nights have a warmth which seems their own and unborrowed from the embers of the day; the fruit-tree tops are tipped with silver; the nightingale sings in the pomegranate tree; the gates of the palazzo are thrown wide for the masquers; at morning the lover seeks shelter in the grove of sycamore—the lover's tree—or we notice the Franciscan brother gliding along in the shadow with the basket of simples on his arm; in the streets at noon the light glares, the mad blood is stirring in men's veins, and the ruffler's rapier grows impatient of its scabbard; it is the land where a swift solution of the perplexities of hate or of love

is found in the poignard or the poison-phial. Let any one read the Memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini, and he will perceive how truly Shakspere, who perhaps was never out of England, caught with his imagination the external aspect and the manners of Italy in the Renaissance.

In Goethe's recast of "Romeo and Juliet,"* in which he aimed at giving the play in a concentrated form, the opening scene presents the front of Capulet's house where the servants are singing while they deck the doors with lamps and wreaths; the closing scene is the vault, with Friar Laurence left alone to moralise above the bodies of the lovers. Shakspere, after his manner, represents his chief figures as standing out from a background. He shows us in the first scene how the lives of Romeo and Juliet have grown upon the hate of the rival houses; and in the last, how their deaths are sacrificial, and serve as an atonement between the sorrowing survivors. Note, before the *mêlée* begins with what amused interest Shakspere distinguishes his minor characters. The valiant Sampson brags largely of his quarrelsomeness (a virtue among the Capulets), but Gregory is the leading spirit, and when the two servants of the Montagues appear, Sampson, mindful perhaps of the other's "swashing blow," is very willing to give his fellow the precedence, all his valour having shrunk to the poor dimensions of an incitement to Gregory to quarrel, together with a strictly legal biting of the thumb, quite in a general way, so that it remains for any Montague who may please to appropriate the insult. The position is like

* This will be found in Boas's "Nachträge zu Goethe's Sämmtlichen Werken: zweiter theil." (Leipzig, 1841.)

that of a pair of terriers, each eyeing the other and moving round and round into suspicious points of vantage, with certain suppressed snarls. Only on Tybalt's approach does the tactician Gregory decide to assume the offensive, and give his orders to Sampson (who does the talking) to utter the decisive insult: "Say—'better'; here comes one of my master's kinsmen." A fierce breed of swashbucklers are these Capulets, if Tybalt represent them aright:

> "What, drawn, and talk of peace? I hate the word,
> As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee;"

or old Capulet, who has hurried out of doors in his gown, gesticulating angrily, and crying for his long sword. The Montagues are a milder race; Benvolio, always a peacemaker, provokes Mercutio's brightest raillery by his inability to enjoy a brawl (Act III., Sc. i.); and evidently old Montague, though he flourishes his sword, has no heart in the conflict:

> "Who set this ancient quarrel new abroach?
> Speak, nephew, you were by when it began."

In the play of "Hamlet," before the young Prince appears, clad in mourning garb, among the obsequious courtiers, we are interested in him by Horatio's words upon the platform:

> "This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him."

He is the one, if any, to learn the secret from the ghost. So, in the present play, we hear of Romeo before he is seen in person. The first words tell us that

he is a mother's idol—they are words of Lady Montague, trembling with anxiety for him in this city of strife:

> "O, where is Romeo? saw you him to-day?
> Right glad I am he was not at this fray."

"O, where is Romeo?" is once again his mother's cry when the sentence of exile is pronounced which sends her son to Mantua, and sends her broken-hearted to the grave. The words which follow Lady Montague's question tell us that Romeo is already the devoutest of lovers. All the amorous rites of disconsolate adorers he duly practises; all phrases of the amorous dialect he utters, when he comes before us, with faultless intonation. Shakspere adopts, no doubt deliberately, a manner of speech which even Petrarch did not disdain.* Elsewhere in Shakspere there is excellent mockery of the affectations and melancholy madness of lovers. But here it is not meant that we should smile at the debonair Italian youth wandering in the sycamore grove, stricken with the malady of love, and "augmenting the fresh morning dew" with tears. Shakspere regards these vague love-longings as growing pains of the heart in adolescence. They are the tremblings of the needle before it settles towards the pole. Romeo loves Rosaline before he loves Juliet. Shakspere found the incident in Brooke, who contrasts the wise and virtuous Rosaline with Juliet the rash and unfortunate; our poet retains the incident, but spares us the moral. Shall we think Romeo's love of Juliet less whole and single

* Romeo's unloverlike question, "Where shall we dine?" is of course asked only to turn away Benvolio from pursuing his inquiries after Rosaline.

because she displaced a rival? But Shakspere allows the rival to be merely a shadow; if Romeo had loved not one but a score of Rosalines, it would have meant no more than that he was young, and knew not how to dispose of a waste of wandering desires.

When Capulet's servant, puzzled by the list of persons invited to the banquet, hands the paper which he is unable to read to Romeo, the lover reads the names "with listless good nature" until "his eye lights and his tongue lingers on the name of Rosaline." I have quoted the words of a critic of Mr Irving's acting, but a careful student of the text may perhaps discover a hint which carries with it the authority of Shakspere for that lingering over Rosaline's name. The invitation, apparently prose, is really written throughout in blank verse:

> "Signior Martino and his wife and daughters;
> County Anselme and his beauteous sisters;"

and so on until we come to a defective line—the only one in the series—

> "My fair niece Rosaline: Livia."

Why this one irregular line? Because it is broken for the pause which is to follow the name of Romeo's lady-love, and the gap is filled by the lover's brightening glance and the thought, "Here, then, is a chance of beholding her."*

* See Dr Abbott's Shaksperian Grammar, § 508. "A foot or syllable can be omitted where there is any marked pause arising from emotion." It might be argued that the word *fair* is a dissyllable. Sidney Walker seems to approve of the proposed insertion of *and* before *Livia*.

In Brooke's poem Romeo goes to the banquet to cure himself of love, and by seeing many beautiful faces to acquire indifference to all. In Shakspere's play he goes to rejoice in Rosaline's superiority over rival beauties; but after he once enters Capulet's doors we hear no word of Rosaline; she might as well not be there; the marsh-fire of sentiment has gone out in the dawn of genuine passion. Juliet, in Brooke's poem, enters the hall of festival as any maiden might, with no special thought that her period of virginal freedom is drawing to a close. Shakspere, in the admirable scene before the banquet which introduces us to the Nurse, rouses Juliet from her careless girlhood, and turns her thoughts to love before she has yet seen Romeo's face. On one side Lady Capulet, skilled in worldly views of marriage, on the other the garrulous Nurse, whose old senses are tickled by the thought of youthful pleasure, much as her gums might mumble some toothsome morsel, set upon Juliet and train her in the way that she should go towards wedlock. After the praise of Paris, sounded on the right by one matron, echoed on the left by the other—and Shakspere ironically makes the praise put into Lady Capulet's mouth grotesquely fantastical—what less can Juliet answer to the question, "Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?" than

"I 'll look to like, if looking liking move."

But not one word of Paris, any more than of Rosaline, do we hear in all the festival scene. She goes, however, into the lighted room not as a child of fourteen (Shakspere reduces her age by two years from the sixteen

years of Brooke *), but aware that she is already sought in marriage, and with feelings that tremulously anticipate the approach of love. So that an hour ago to her mother's question—

> "How stands your disposition to be married?"

she could make her maidenly reply—(almost in Ophelia's manner)—

> "It is an honour that I dream not of;"

and now she can whisper to her own heart while the Nurse moves off to ask for Romeo's name—

> "If he be married
> My grave is like to be my wedding bed."

which indeed it proves to be, but with Romeo by her side.

Here notice how Shakspere ever and anon throughout the tragedy strikes a note of doom; sounds, as it were, an alarum-bell that vibrates in our hearts, and whose tone grows more and more like that of a passing-bell as the drama draws towards its close. Now it is Romeo's thrill of disquietude—a shadow as of some cloud, before he enters Capulet's mansion, like Hamlet's "gaingiving" before the passage of arms, and dismissed, like his, with an appeal to Providence—

> "My mind misgives
> Some consequence yet hanging in the stars."
> * * * * *
> But He, that hath the steerage of my course,
> Direct my sail!"

* "Shakspere," I have written elsewhere, "loved the years of budding womanhood. Miranda is fifteen years of age; Marina, fourteen." Both, like Juliet, are children of the South. In Da Porto Juliet's age is eighteen.

Now it is Juliet's terror of joy in the first recognition of perfect love—

> "I have no joy of this contract to-night:
> It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,
> Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
> Ere one can say 'It lightens.'"

Now it is her vision of Romeo as she looks over her balcony with pallid face and wide, sad eyes, in the grey of dawn—

> "Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,
> As one dead in the bottom of a tomb."

Now it is her words of entreaty to Lady Capulet, who has urged on her the hasty marriage with Paris—

> "Delay this marriage for a month, a week;
> Or, if you do not, make the bridal bed
> In that dim monument where Tybalt lies."

Now it rings more dismally in her words to the Friar before he proposes the expedient which is to restore her to her lover—

> "Bid me go into a new-made grave,
> And hide me with a dead man in his shroud,
> * * * * *
> And I will do it without fear or doubt
> To live an unstained wife to my sweet love."

And now this anticipation of doom takes the ghastliest form of all, for the spectre masks itself in the garb of gladness, when Romeo, on the morning of the last and most piteous day, wakes with a radiant sense of youth and hope from a dream of Juliet—

> "My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne,
> And all this day an unaccustom'd spirit
> Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts.

> I dreamt my lady came and found me dead—
> Strange dream, that gives a dead man leave to think!—
> And breathed such life with kisses in my lips
> That I revived and was an emperor"—

whereupon instantly enters Balthasar with the news from Verona which changes Romeo to a wild and haggard wretch, steadied only by one desperate resolve.

We should like to know what was Romeo's earlier dream of the night preceding the banquet:

> "I dreamt a dream to-night;"

but, like the speech of Cassius to the Roman people, we must construct it out of our own imagination, for Shakspere has left it untold, and chosen to give us instead—nor can we complain—Mercutio's brilliant arabesque of fancies about Queen Mab. Tybalt's interruption of the harmony of the guest-chamber is of Shakspere's invention, and prepares us for the catastrophe of the next day. Old Capulet will not allow the fiery youngster to wrong his hospitality, but, in preserving peace, he displays the same quick Capulet temper which has led to Tybalt's outbreak. Observe how this part of the scene is concluded with a kind of epilogue in four rhymed lines uttered by Tybalt as he withdraws:

> "Patience perforce with wilful choler meeting
> Makes my flesh tremble in their different greeting.
> I will withdraw: but this intrusion shall,
> Now seeming sweet, convert to bitter gall."

And now begins the second section of the scene. Tybalt gone, the pilgrim Romeo takes "the white wonder" of Juliet's hand (he thinks of this hand afterwards when abandoned to misery in the friar's cell), and

utters himself "in the numbers that Petrarch flowed in." This dialogue between the pilgrim and his saint does not pass the bounds of courtly Italian manners, yet there is love pulsing beneath the ceremony, and under Juliet's arch replies there is already a yielding of her heart to passion.

Between the banquet scene and the balcony scene Shakspere interposes a short dialogue of Mercutio and Benvolio, in which the former makes mock of Romeo's malady of love with a licence of tongue which we will not call gross only because it is so nimble and leaps so lightly over all propriety. Before passing from the hall of festival to the moon-lighted garden we need some relief from the ardour and enthusiasm of young love. Mercutio's sallies of a wanton brain with their subacid flavour restore our palate, and serve the purpose of olives before the wine.

And now we pass into the enchanted garden. In the wonderful dialogue of love, to which the nightingale's song is a fit accompaniment, Shakspere emphasises the contrast between Romeo's romantic sentiment and Juliet's direct and simple passion. For Romeo she is like the "winged messenger of heaven borne upon a cloud," and he himself is winged also with the pinions of love. But Juliet does not ever leave the earth—it is the rivalry of the houses dividing them which first occupies her thoughts—

> "O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?"—

and when she discovers him within the orchard her instant fear is that Tybalt or some other Capulet may find him there:

"The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here."

Romeo, with his reiterated "fair saint," "dear saint," would renew the manner of speech of the banquet-hall, but Juliet needs plainer words:

"If they do see thee, they will murder thee."

While Romeo, "in a sort of sweet surprise at the fervid girl-passion which suddenly wraps him round,"* sees all things as if in some blissful dream, to Juliet the realities of life are more vividly real than ever before:

"If that thy bent of love be honourable,
Thy purpose marriage, send me word to-morrow."

She never leaves the earth, but this earth has grown of measureless worth through Romeo's presence. Her confession of love has been compared to that of Miranda in "The Tempest"; the soul of each desires to stand naked and unashamed before the one beholder: "Farewell compliment!" "Hence bashful cunning!" But Juliet's passion has to cast aside a heavier brocade of ceremony than was worn on Prospero's island, and it is with a lovely vehemence that she throws off the constraint.

"My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee
The more I have; for both are infinite."

Friar Laurence's cell in the grey and dewy morning is a retreat of delightful quiet after the revelry and transport of the night. This amiable student and spectator of life, standing outside the turmoil, views

* Words of Fanny Kemble.

human beings much as he views the herbs and stones whose qualities he studies, only he regards his fellows with a kindlier sympathy. From the ardent avowals of love we pass to the moralisings over the dank leaves and buds in the friar's osier cage. He is a centre of repose throughout the play. And yet we may be permitted to doubt whether his well-balanced reflections and well-meant scheming contain more of true wisdom than do the native promptings of the lovers' hearts. Such was Goethe's thought apparently when he makes his Lorenzo exclaim at sight of Romeo slain—

> "Where is my wisdom now, where all my care,
> And secret knowledge of each natural power?"

Every one defers to the old man's judgment, and yet who blunders and stumbles more than he? In a later scene Romeo, on Tybalt's death, takes refuge in the cell, and there gives way to the abandonment of despair, "palpitating with nervous anguish, apprehensive of instantaneous revengeful murder, expectant of inevitable sentence of death, overwhelmed with horror at his own sanguinary deed, because his victim is kinsman to his wife, filled with passionate longing for the possession of that wife."* How does the Friar think to comfort him? By a dose of "adversity's sweet milk, philosophy." "Let me dispute with thee of thy estate," is Brother Laurence's proposal to the distracted man. Well may Romeo complain that "wise men have no eyes," and reply—

> "Thou canst not speak of what thou dost not feel."

The Nurse enters the cell with her foolish "Ah, sir! ah,

* Fanny Kemble, "Notes on some of Shakspere's Plays," p. 166.

sir! death is the end of all"; but it is upon words of hers, "My lord, I'll tell my lady you will come," that the tide begins to turn from despair to hope, and with a delicious welling up of joy and confidence that Juliet, after all, will not think of him as "an old murderer," Romeo exclaims—

> "Do so, and bid my love prepare to chide."

Here was a livelier cordial for a young man's fainting spirit than might be had in "adversity's sweet milk, philosophy."

Juliet's nurse, blundering old match-maker and go-between! we cannot but give her a heartfelt sympathy, when trudging in all her pomp through the hot streets in search of Romeo, preceded by Peter the fan-bearer, she has the ill fortune to encounter that hornet Mercutio. So infectious is his mirth, and such fair game appears the Nurse, that even the staid Benvolio is caught into the folly of it. How cruelly the ancient lady's plumes are ruffled by these irreverent youths! How the white table of her vestal mind is sullied by Mercutio's indecorous jests! And how hotly she turns upon her apathetic fan-bearer, who should have been the champion of her insulted dignity! But Romeo knows how to soothe the spirit of an ancient gentlewoman, for when Mercutio has buzzed away, and the Nurse has delivered a virtuous lecture on the "weak dealing" of leading her young lady "into a fool's paradise, as they say," the lover's purse suddenly gapes and something is slipped into the good dame's hand even in the moment when her lips decline the largess: "No truly, sir, not a penny."

And then it is that all those touching little secrets come out—how the prating thing her mistress had as lieve see a toad as Paris, and how she has the "prettiest sententious" about the letter of the alphabet which begins Rosemary and Romeo.

We forgive the old lady much, even her copious concern for her own aching bones, for sake of the glad news which she brings to Juliet, calling the scarlet to her cheeks, and making her step, when she trips to the friar's cell, as buoyant as the morning air. All the current of her being has set towards Romeo, and hurries forward to lose itself and find itself again in him. Much idle moralising has been expended on Juliet's bridal soliloquy—

"Gallop apace, ye fiery-footed steeds,"

in which she sings, as it were, her own epithalamium in the manner of Elizabethan poetry. It was a bold endeavour of the dramatist to transport himself into the breast of the young Italian bride. "I confess," says Mrs Jameson, "I have been shocked at the utter want of taste and refinement in those who, with coarse derision, or in a spirit of prudery, yet more gross and perverse, have dared to comment on this beautiful 'Hymn to the Night' breathed out by Juliet in the silence and solitude of her chamber." The only comment one cares to make is this—that Juliet's purity of heart henceforth lies in a "bounty boundless as the sea" to the one man, stainless himself, who has won her stainless maidenhood, and in the resolution to guard herself as sacred to him from every alien touch, even

though it were by flight within the portals of the grave:

> "Oh! bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
> From off the battlements of yonder tower;
> Or walk in thievish ways; or bid me lurk
> Where serpents are.
> * * * * *
> Or bid me go into a new-made grave,
> And hide me with a dead man in his shroud—
> Things that to hear them told have made me tremble—
> And I will do it without fear or doubt,
> To live an unstain'd wife to my sweet love."

A heart may be pure as snow or pure as flame, and Juliet's is of the latter kind.

The bitter sweet of all partings, "such as press the life from out young hearts," is condensed in that scene of reluctant farewells in the dawn. But when Lady Capulet enters the chamber, though Juliet's tears cannot cease to flow, she meets her mother with a gallant simulation of anger against Tybalt's slayer, at the same time flattering her own soul with the consciousness that her two-edged words, with their double meanings, are secret caresses and not words of hate. And now, parted from her husband, the girl-wife of a single night finds the whole household up in arms against her—mother, father, even the gross-minded old woman who should have been a second mother to her—all resolved to bribe or to browbeat her into a marriage which she abhors. Having pleaded as a child for mercy and found none, Juliet rises a woman, and with one last word of exquisite self-pity—

> "Alack! alack! that Heaven should practise stratagems
> Upon so soft a subject as myself,"

she has done with entreaty and lamentation, and henceforth will take her own resolve and keep her own counsel.

But her persecution is not quite at an end. At the cell-door of Friar Laurence whom must she encounter but Paris. Shakspere is not as hard to Paris as are some of Shakspere's critics, who find excellent reasons for his death at the close of the play as a piece of retributive justice for his loveless pursuit of Juliet. But the graceful young Count really loves Juliet in his own fashion, and he dies because he has come to express his sorrow, to utter elegant elegiacs and strew blossoms on her tomb. Nor does Romeo refuse his dying prayer that he may lie near Juliet's corpse. But the noble Count assumes a little too readily that a curled darling of Verona, of noble parentage and fair demesnes, accepted by the parents of his lady-love, need not submit to a very arduous course of wooing. On perceiving Juliet, as she sadly but resolutely stands in the doorway, with pale and tear-stained face, he takes for granted, with a charming impertinence, that she is his own already:

"Happily met, my lady and my wife."

The face, which she has abused with tears, is his property, and must not be so wronged. Juliet, who feels that she is all Romeo's, or, if not Romeo's, is the bride of Death, never shows a more gallant bearing than when she bandies words with Paris, hiding her agony under a play of repartee. Such high-mettled cunning is the ornament of a woman's chivalry. But when Paris is dismissed, and she turns to her good father confessor, the outbreak comes—

"Oh, shut the door! and when thou hast done so,
Come weep with me. Past hope, past cure, past help!"

Such relief is there in giving way to the paroxysm of grief.

Juliet's great soliloquy before she drinks the potion is the triumph or the snare of the actress. She has seen the last of the Nurse and the last of her mother. In the hall below all is bustle and confusion, for the eager old Capulet has hurried on his daughter's marriage from Thursday to Wednesday, and forgetful of his pious resolve to sorrow for Tybalt, and invite no more than "a friend or two," he now has a score of cunning cooks at work, and must himself fidget and meddle in their affairs. But in Juliet's chamber all is dimness and silence; she is about to close her eyes on life, and when next they open it must be in the ancient receptacle where Tybalt lies festering in his shroud. Hazlitt speaks with enthusiasm of Miss O'Neill's delivery of Juliet's speech as marking "the fine play and undulation of natural sensibility, rising and falling with the gusts of passion, and at last worked up into an agony of despair, in which her imagination approaches the brink of frenzy." Her scream at the imaginary sight of Tybalt's ghost is censured by the critic, as not preserving the distinction between physical and intellectual horror—a scream which, says Hazlitt, "startled the audience, as it preceded the speech which explained its meaning." Lady Martin has recently told the story of her first rendering, when Helen Faucit and a girl, of this character—the earliest of all her dramatic impersonations, and one interwoven, she says, with her

life. "With all the ardour of a novice," she writes, "I took no heed that the phial for the sleeping potion, which Friar Laurence had given me, was of glass, but kept it tightly in my hand, as though it were a real deliverance from a dreaded fate which it was to effect for me, through the long impassioned scene which follows. When the time came to drink the potion there was none; for the phial had been crushed in my hand, the fragments of glass were eating their way into the tender palm, and the blood was trickling down in a little stream over my pretty dress. This had been for some time apparent to the audience, but the Juliet knew nothing of it, until the red stream attracted her attention. Excited as I already was, this was too much for me; and always having a sickening horror of the bare sight or even talk of blood, poor Juliet grew faint, and staggered towards the bed, on which she really fainted. I remember nothing of the end of the play, beyond seeing many kind people in my dressing-room, and wondering what was meant. Our good family doctor from London was among the audience, and bound up the wounded hand. This never occurred again, because they ever afterwards gave me a wooden phial. But, oh my dress!—my first waking thought. I was inconsolable until told that the injured part could be renewed."

The lamentations for Juliet, found at morning cold and stiff upon her bed, have a certain air of unreality thrown over them—a movement in the case of Lady Capulet, her husband, and the bridegroom, of a lyrical kind, in which each speaker sustains a part, alto, tenor, or bass, in the pseudo-requiem (let the reader notice the

parallelism of the three speeches) while the Nurse's lamentation—

> "O day, O day, O day, O hateful day,"

accompanied by a desperate resort to the *aqua vitæ* bottle, is somewhat in the manner of the tragical mirth of Pyramus, "O night, O night, alack, alack, alack," in the "tedious brief scene" of the Athenian craftsmen. It was Shakspere's intention that for us who know the secret, the passion of the real tragedy should not be forestalled; and perhaps he meant with a touch of irony to expose the worth of that noisy lamentation for the supposed dead girl, uttered by those who had no understanding nor mercy for her while she was in their midst.

The fifth act has a brilliance of romantic terror and pity—like the splendour of funeral torches in the gloom—such as we do not find elsewhere in Shakspere, though elsewhere we find tragic effects more like appalling convulsions of the elements of nature. The place is pictured with a few strong touches of ghastly suggestiveness; the churchyard ground is "loose, unfirm, with digging up of graves;" the torch "vainly lends its light to grubs and eyeless skulls;" the monument is "the palace of dim Night." And since life and beauty are here in the camp of death, death is conceived in no tender elegiac manner, but as a cruel and hungry foe—

> "Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death,
> Gorg'd with the dearest morsel of the earth,
> Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open."

No "dark Mother gliding near with soft feet," no "strong Deliveress" is death as Romeo sees death in

the tomb, but a pale flag-bearer who triumphs over the beauty of life, or—more hideous—a "lean abhorred monster," amorous of female loveliness, who keeps the fair Juliet in the dark to be his paramour. When Romeo takes his resolve to die, his words are plain and few; as he approaches the vault his purpose fills him with a savage carelessness; and yet it is with gentleness that he chides from his path the unknown youth afterwards discovered to be Paris, whom he would spare if it might be permitted. Once within the vault, and in presence of his beloved, all the poetry of Romeo's imagination, which had made him a seeker for curious fantasies in the days of his shadow-love for Rosaline, which had made him an impassioned dreamer in the moonlit orchard—all this poetry has one last triumphant outbreak. And then comes the end. "I am no pilot," said Romeo in the moonlit garden, conscious that the guiding hand and eye were not his gifts—

> "I am no pilot; yet wert thou as far
> As that vast shore washed with the farthest sea,
> I would adventure for such merchandise."

Now he has ventured to that vast shore, but what a haven is this! And unconsciously he echoes the thought of that night of joy in this night of misery—

> "Come bitter conduct, come unsavoury guide!
> Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
> The dashing rocks thy sea-sick, weary bark!"

In Otway's strange transformation of the play in which Romeo becomes an ancient Roman, son of Caius Marius, and Juliet becomes his love, Lavinia, there is a dialogue between the pair before the poison quite overcrows the

spirit of young Marius. Garrick, in his stage version of our tragedy, taking some hints from Otway, varies from Shakspere, and expands the dialogue with some eighteenth century sentimentalities—

"*Rom.* My powers are blasted,
'Twixt death and love I'm torn—I am distracted!
But death's strongest—and must I leave thee, Juliet!
Oh, cursed, cursed fate! in sight of heav'n—
Jul. Thou rav'st—lean on my breast—
Rom. Fathers have flinty hearts, no tears can melt 'em.
Nature pleads in vain—children must be wretched."

It were presumptuous to say that had Shakspere been acquainted with the earlier form of the story—Da Porto's, which agrees in this particular with Garrick's—he would have rejected it in favour of the form found in Brooke; and we can believe that a dialogue of marvellous beauty, pure poetry, and therefore unlike the effective stage nonsense of Garrick, might have been written. But we do not desire any variation from the scene as we have it. No unavailing lamentations are uttered by Juliet—there is but one agonised moment, that in which she perceives that the phial has been emptied, and fears she may not find the means to die. But in another instant the "happy dagger" is in her heart; and it is on Romeo's body that she falls.

And so the event is over; the star-crossed lovers have done with sorrow, and can never more be separated. Over their bodies kinsmen pledge a lasting peace. They shall lie side by side in effigy, all of pure gold, for other lovers to look on. Their lives have been fulfilled; they are made one in all men's memories; it is not wholly ill with them. Dawn widens over the

world, not bright, but with a grey tranquillity, as the grieved witnesses move away with hushed speech about the dead—

> "A glooming peace this morning with it brings ;
> The sun, for sorrow, will not show his head :
> Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things."

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.*

THE study of Shakspere and his contemporaries is the study of one family consisting of many members, all of whom have the same life-blood in their veins, all of whom are recognisable by accent and bearing, and acquired habits, and various unconscious self-revealments as kinsmen, while each possesses a character of his own, and traits of mind and manners and expression which distinguish him from the rest. The interest of the study lies chiefly in the gradual apprehension, now on this side, now on that, of the common nature of this great family of writers, until we are in complete intellectual possession of it, and in tracing out the characteristics peculiar to each of its individuals. There is, perhaps, no other body of literature towards which we are attracted by so much of unity, and at the same time by so much of variety. If the school of Rubens had been composed of greater men than it was, we should have had an illustrious parallel in the history of painting to the group of Shakspere and his contemporaries in the history of poetry.

The "school of Rubens" we say; we could hardly speak with accuracy of the "school of Shakspere."

* This essay was published in the *Fortnightly Review* many years ago, before the literary cult of Marlowe's genius had become the mode. The essay on Milton which follows was written as a companion study, each essay attempting to show how a great poet works, who is an idealist, rather than a naturalist or realist, in art.

Yet there can be little doubt that he was in a considerable degree the master of the inferior and younger artists who surrounded him. It is the independence of Ben Jonson's work and its thorough individuality, rather than comparative greatness or beauty of poetical achievement, which have given him a kind of acknowledged right to the second place amongst the Elizabethan dramatists, a title to vice-president's chair in the session of the poets. His aims were different from those of the others, and at a time when plays and playwrights were little esteemed, he had almost a nineteenth-century sense of the dignity of art, and of his own art in particular:—

> "And he told them plainly he deserved the bays,
> For his were called Works, where others were but Plays."

But Webster, and Massinger, and Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shirley (who were content, like Shakspere, to write "plays," and did not aspire to "works") are really followers of the greatest of all dramatic writers, and very different handiwork they would probably have turned out had they wrought in their craft without the teaching of his practice and example. Shakspere's immediate predecessors were men of no mean powers; but they are separated by a great gulf from his contemporaries and immediate successors. That tragedy is proportioned to something else than the number of slaughtered bodies piled upon the stage at the end of act five, that comedy has store of mirth more vital, deeper, happier, more human than springs from

> "Jigging veins of rhyming mother wits,
> And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay"—

these were discoveries in art made by Shakspere; and is it too much to suppose that but for him these discoveries might have come later by a dozen years or more? The works of the pre-Shaksperians are of small interest for the most part, except as illustrating a necessary stage of growth in the history of the drama. They do not win upon us with the charm, the singleness of aim, the divine innocency, the sacred inexperience, the unction of art, which we are sensible of in the works of Raphael's predecessors. Italian painting may be personified under the figure of a royal maiden who, after a period of chaste seclusion and tender virginity, came forth into the world, and was a queen and mother of men. The English drama was, first, a schoolboy, taught rude piety by the priests, and rude jokes by his fellows; then a young man, lusty, passionate, mettlesome, riotous, aspiring, friendly, full of extravagant notions and huffing words, given to irregular ways and disastrous chances and desperate recoveries, but, like Shakspere's wild prince, containing the promise of that grave, deep-thoughted, and magnificent manhood which was afterwards realised.

It is, however, amongst the pre-Shaksperians that we find the man who, of all the Elizabethan dramatists, stands next to Shakspere in poetical stature, the one man who, if he had lived longer and accomplished the work which lay clear before him, might have stood even *beside* Shakspere, as supreme in a different province of dramatic art. Shakspere would have been master of the realists or naturalists; Marlowe, master of the idealists. The starting-point of Shakspere, and of those who

resemble him, is always something concrete, something real in the moral world—a character and an action; to no more elementary components than human characters and actions can the products of their art be reduced in the alembic of critical analysis; further than these they are irreducible. The starting-point of Marlowe, and of those who resemble Marlowe, is something abstract—a passion or an idea; to a passion or an idea each work of theirs can be brought back. Revenge is not the subject of the "Merchant of Venice;" Antonio and Shylock, Portia and Nerissa, Lorenzo and Jessica, Bassanio and Gratiano—these, and a passage in the lives of these, are the true subjects. Even of "Romeo and Juliet" the subject is not love, but two young and loving hearts surrounded by a group of most living figures, and overshadowed by a tyrannous fate. Those critics, and they are unfortunately numerous since German criticism became a power in this country, who attempt to discover an intention, idea, or, as they say, *motiv* presiding throughout each of Shakspere's plays, have got upon an entirely mistaken track, and they inevitably come out after labyrinthine wanderings at the other end of nowhere. Shakspere's trade was not that of preparing nuts with concealed mottoes and sentiments in them for German commentators to crack. Goethe, who wrought in Shakspere's manner (though sometimes with a self-consciousness which went hankering after ideas and intentions), Goethe saw clearly the futility of all attempts to release from their obscurity the secrets of his own works, as if the mystery of what he had created were other than the mystery of life. The children of his imagination were bone of his bone,

and flesh of his flesh, not constructions of his intellect nor embodied types of the passions. "Wilhelm Meister is one of the most incalculable productions"—it is Goethe himself who is speaking—"I myself can scarcely be said to have the key to it. People seek a central point, and that is hard and not even right. I should think a rich manifold life brought close to our eyes would be enough in itself without any express tendency, which, after all, is only for the intellect." *A rich manifold life brought close to our eyes*—that is the simplest and truest account possible of any or all of Shakspere's dramas. But Marlowe worked, as Milton also worked, from the starting-point of an idea or passion, and the critic who might dissect all the creatures of Shakspere's art without ever having the honour to discover a soul, may really, by dexterous anatomy, come upon the souls of Marlowe's or of Milton's creatures—intelligent monads seated observant in the pineal gland.

Shakspere and Marlowe, the two foremost men of the Elizabethan artistic movement, remind us in not a few particulars of the two foremost men of the artistic movement in Germany eighty or ninety years ago, Goethe and Schiller. Shakspere and Goethe are incomparably the larger and richer natures, their art is incomparably the greater and more fruitful; yet they were themselves much greater than their art. Shakspere rendered more by a measureless sum of a man's whole nature into poetry than Marlowe did; yet his own life ran on below the rendering of it into poetry, and was never wholly absorbed and lost therein. We can believe that under different circumstances Shakspere

might never have written a line, might have carried all that lay within him unuttered to his grave. While still in the full manhood of his powers, he chose to put off his garments of enchantment, break his magic staff, and dismiss his airy spirits; or, in plain words, bring to a close his career as poet, and live out the rest of his life as country gentleman in his native town. It is a suggestive fact, too, that the scattered references to Shakspere which we find in the writings of his contemporaries, show us the poet concealed and sometimes forgotten in the man, and make it clear that he moved among his fellows with no assuming of the bard or prophet, no aspect as of one inspired, no air of authority as of one divinely commissioned; that, on the contrary, he appeared as a pleasant comrade, genial, gentle, full of civility in the large meaning of that word, upright in dealing, ready and bright in wit, quick and sportive in conversation. Goethe, also, though he valued his own works highly, valued them from a superior position as one above them, and independent of them. But Marlowe, like Schiller, seems to have lived in and for his art. His poetry was no episode in his life, but his very life itself. With an university education, and a prospect, which for a man of his powers can hardly have been an unpromising one, of success in one of the learned professions (not necessarily the Church), he must abandon his hardly-earned advantages, return to the poverty from which he had sprung, and add to poverty the disgrace of an actor's and playwright's life. His contemporaries usually speak of him as a man would be

spoken of who was possessed by his art, rather than as one who, like Shakspere, held it in possession.

> "That fine madness still he did retain,
> Which rightly should possess a poet's brain."

So wrote Drayton; and according to Chapman's fine hyperbole he

> "Stood
> Up to the chin in the Pierian flood."

This is not the way in which Shakspere is spoken of. Nor is it an uncharacteristic circumstance that probably while he lay for a short time tortured with the wound of his own dagger, and death was hastening, one of Marlowe's chief anxieties, if the tradition be trustworthy, was about the fate of his "Hero and Leander," and that he commended it for completion to the man of all others best fitted for the task—the great translator of Homer, whose words have just been quoted.

But if Marlowe be the Schiller—the subjective poet, the idealist, as Shakspere is the Goethe, objective and naturalistic, of Elizabethan art—he is a Schiller of a decidedly Satanic school. With an important critical movement behind him, around him a regulated state of society, and many influences calling into activity the better part of his nature, the true Schiller's head and heart and sensibilities as an artist passed through their "Sturm und Drang" fever, and came forth illuminated, purified, and elevated. On the other hand, the world amidst which he moved was too much one of merely cultured refinement; no rude but large and ardent popular heart beat in his hearing; rather, in the court

and *salons* and theatre of Weimar, official waistcoats rose and fell with admirable but not very inspiring regularity over self-possessed and decorous bosoms. The talk was of poems, pictures, busts, medals, and the last little new law of the Duke. It is not surprising that Schiller's art should have a touch of coldness in it. Marlowe had behind him, not a critical movement like the German, but the glare of Smithfield fires and the ghostly procession of noble figures dealt with by the headsman on Tower Hill, terrible religious and political battles, and the downfall of a faith. For his own part, taking art as the object of his devotion, he thrust all religions somewhat fiercely aside, and professed an angry Atheism. The Catholic hierarchy and creed he seems to have hated with an energy profoundly different from the feeling of Shakspere, distinguished as that was by a discriminating justice. The reckless Bohemian London life which Marlowe shared with his companions, Greene, Peele, Nash, and other wild livers, had nothing in it to sober his judgment, to chasten and purify his imagination and taste, nothing or very little to elevate his feelings. But it was quick and passionate. The "Sturm und Drang" through which our English dramatists passed was of far sterner stress than that of Germany. But Marlowe did pass through it. He perished unhappily before he had acquired mastery in his second style. He lived long enough to escape from the period, so to speak, of his "Robbers," not long enough to attain to the serene ideality of a "Wilhelm Tell." But Marlowe possessed one immense advantage over Schiller—he stood not in the midst of a petty ducal court, but in

the centre of a great nation, and at a time when that nation was all air and fire, its baser elements disappearing in the consciousness of a new-found power, a time when the nation was no aggregation of atoms cohering by accident, and each clamorous for its own particular rights, but a living body, with something like a unity of ideas, and with feelings self-organised around splendid objects of common interest, pride, and admiration. The strength and weakness of what Marlowe accomplished in literature correspond with the influences from the real world to which he was subject. He is great, ardent, aspiring; but he is also without balance, immoderate, unequal, extravagant. There is an artistic grace which is the counterpart of the theological grace of charity. It pervades everything that Shakspere has written; there is little of it in Marlowe's writings. There is in them "a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination unhallowed by anything but its own energies. His thoughts burn within him like a furnace with bickering flames, or throwing out black smoke and mists that hide the dawn of genius, or like a poisonous mineral corrode the heart." * If a Schiller, then, surely a Schiller of a Satanic school.

Marlowe's works consist of six or seven plays and some translations, one of which—a paraphrase of the "Hero and Leander" of the pseudo-Musæus—is remarkable as evidencing, more than any other of his writings, the Renaissance feeling for sensuous beauty which Marlowe possessed in a degree hardly, if at all, less than that displayed by Shakspere in his youthful

* Hazlitt.

"Venus and Adonis." Of the dramas, one was produced in conjunction with Nash, and we cannot safely assign to its authors their respective shares in the work. One—"The Massacre at Paris"—seems to have been thrown off to meet some temporary occasion; and certainly, however this may have been, it may without remorse be set down as of little worth. A third was written, we can hardly doubt, when the poet was in the transition period from his early to what would have been, if he had lived, his mature style. Though in some respects the best, it is in truth the least characteristic of all his more important writings. There are critics who can more readily forgive any literary deficiencies or incapacities than sins of actual commission, who can bear with every evidence of dulness of poetical vision, languor of the thinking power, uncertainty of the shaping hands, but who have no toleration for splendid crimes, the sins of the sanguine temperament, extravagant fancies, thoughts that climb too high, turbulency of manner, and great swelling words of vanity. These have pronounced "Edward the Second" Marlowe's best play. And it is, doubtless, free from the violence and extravagance of the dramas that preceded it, from the vaulting ambition of poetical style, which "o'erleaps itself, and falls o' the other;" but, except in a few scenes, and notably the closing ones, it wants also the clear raptures, the high reaches of wit, the "brave translunary things," the single lines—each one enough to ransom a poet from captivity—which especially characterise Marlowe. The historical matter he is unable to handle as successfully as a subject of an imaginative or partly mythical kind; it does

not yield and take shape in his hands as readily, and accordingly "Edward the Second," though containing a few splendid passages, is rather a series of scenes from the chronicles of England than a drama.

Three plays remain,* and on these the fame of Marlowe may safely rest—"Tamburlaine the Great," "The Tragical History of Dr Faustus," and "The Jew of Malta." Each of these is admirably characteristic, and could have proceeded from no other brain than that of its creator. The three together form a great achievement in literature for a man probably not more than twenty-seven years of age when the latest was written; and they still stand apart from the neighbouring crowd of dramatic compositions, and close to one another—a little group distinguished by peculiar marks of closest kinship, a peculiar physiognomy, complexion, demeanour, and accent. Each of the three is the rendering into artistic form of the workings of a single passion, while at the same time each of these several passions is only a different form of life assumed by one supreme passion, central in all the great characters of Marlowe, magisterial, claiming the whole man, and in its operation fatal.

The subject of "Tamburlaine"—probably Marlowe's earliest work, certainly the first which made an impression on the public—if we would express it in the simplest way, is the mere lust of dominion, the passion of "a mighty hunter before the Lord" for sovereign sway, the love of power in its crudest shape. This, and this alone, living and acting in the person of the Scythian

* Four, if we count separately the two parts of "Tamburlaine."

shepherd, gives unity to the multitude of scenes which grow up before us and fall away, like the fiery-hearted blossoms of some inexhaustible tropical plant, blown with sudden and strong vitality, fading and dropping away at night, and replaced next morning by others as sanguine and heavy with perfume. There is no construction in "Tamburlaine." Instead of two plays there might as well have been twenty, if Marlowe could have found it in his heart to husband his large supply of kings, emperors, soldans, pashas, governors, and viceroys who perish before the Scourge of God, or had he been able to discover empires, provinces, and principalities with which to endow a new race of rulers. The play ends from sheer exhaustion of resources. As Alexander was reduced to weep for another world to conquer, so Tamburlaine might have wept because there were no more emperors to fill his cages, no more monarchs to increase his royal stud. He does not weep, but what is much better, dies. The play resembles in its movement no other so much as the "Sultan Amurath" of De Quincey's elder brother. "What by the bowstring, and what by the scimitar, the sultan had so thinned the population with which he commenced business that scarcely any of the characters remained alive at the end of Act the first." Five crops had to be taken off the ground in the tragedy, amounting, in short, to five tragedies involved in one. The difference is, that Marlowe could not be satisfied with less than ten crops and a corresponding number of tragedies.

Yet "Tamburlaine" is the work of a master-hand, untrained. If from some painting ill-composed, full of

crude and violent colour, containing abundant proofs of weakness and inexperience, and having half its canvas crowded with extravagant grotesques which the artist took for sublime—if from such a painting one wonderful face looked out at us, the soul in its eyes and on its lips, a single desire possessing it, eager and simple as a flame, should we question the genius of the painter? And somewhat in this manner the single passion which has the hero of the piece for its temporary body and instrument looks out at us from the play of "Tamburlaine." The lust and the pride of conquest, the ambition to be a god upon earth, the confident sense that in one's own will resides the prime force of nature, disdain of each single thing, how splendid soever, which the world can offer by way of gift or bribe, because less than the possession of all seems worthless—these are feelings which, though evidence from history that they are real is not wanting, are yet even imagined in a vivid way by very few persons. The demands which most of us make on life are moderate; our little lives run on with few great ambitions, and this gross kind of ambition is peculiarly out of relation to our habits of desire. But Marlowe, the son of the Canterbury shoemaker, realised in imagination this ambition as if it were his very own, and gave it most living expression. The author of "Faustus" and "The Jew of Malta" is wholly in such lines as these of Tamburlaine, spoken while he was yet a mere fortunate adventurer:—

> "But, since they measure our deserts so mean,
> That in conceit bear empires on our spears,
> Affecting thoughts coequal with the clouds,
> They shall be kept our forced followers
> Till with their eyes they view us Emperors."

And these:—

> "Forsake thy king, and do but join with me,
> And we will triumph over all the world;
> I hold the Fates fast bound in iron chains,
> And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about."

And these spoken of Tamburlaine by Meander:—

> "Some powers divine, or else infernal, mix'd
> Their angry seeds at his conception:
> For he was never sprung of human race,
> Since with the spirit of his fearful pride
> He dares so doubtlessly resolve of rule,
> And by profession be ambitious."

And lastly these, Tamburlaine speaking:—

> "Nature that fram'd us of four elements
> Warring within our breasts for regiment,
> Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:
> Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
> The wondrous architecture of the world,
> And measure every wandering planet's course,
> Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
> And always moving as the restless spheres,
> Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest
> Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
> That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
> The sweet fruition of an earthly crown."

There is something gross in this ambition, this thirst for reign, this gloating over "the sweetness of a crown," but the very excess or transcendency of the passion saves it from vulgarity. The love of pomp is not the mean love of pomp, but the imperial, combined with the self-surrender of the Renaissance poet to the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Command over material display and pageantry, from the "copper-laced coat and crimson velvet breeches" of the Conqueror up to the

"pampered jades of Asia," is valued chiefly as an emblem of triumph and of power, or rather as a fragment of that universal power which sways all things to its will, and suggestive of it. It is a fine piece of consistency preserved in resistance to the temptation of stage moralising, that when Tamburlaine's great career draws towards its close, and he sees the world passing away from his grasp, he does not lose faith in the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He knows that he must submit to the tyranny of Death; he exhorts his sons to the acquiring of

> "that magnanimity
> That nobly must admit necessity;"

life, he sees, is transitory, but he does not despise it for its transitoriness; sovereignty must be resigned, but still he is proud that he was Tamburlaine and a king; and he delivers over the possession of his empire to his children, lamenting only that their "sweet desires," and those of his friends, must henceforth be deprived of his company. There is a severity of conception in this scene of Tamburlaine's death, which was attained through the projection into his art of Marlowe's own exceeding pride of will.

In one of the passages quoted above the reader may have been struck by the fine line in which our souls are spoken of as "still climbing after knowledge infinite." That aspiring, insatiate, and insatiable curiosity, which for our generation Mr Browning has endeavoured to represent in the person of Paracelsus, Marlowe also conceived in his own way, and with characteristic energy.

Faustus is the Paracelsus of Marlowe. Over the soul of the Würtemberg doctor the passion for knowledge dominates, and all influences of good and evil, the voices of damned and of blessed angels reach him faint and ineffectual as dreams, or distant music, or the suggestions of long-forgotten odours, save as they promise something to glut the fierce hunger and thirst of his intellect. All subjects, however, in the stream of Marlowe's genius are hurried in a single direction. Pride of will drew to itself all other forces of his nature, and made them secondary and subordinate; and accordingly we are not surprised when we find that, in Marlowe's hands, the passion for knowledge which possesses Faustus becomes little more than a body, as it were, giving a special form of life to the same consuming lust of power which he had treated in the earlier drama of "Tamburlaine." To Faustus, in the suggestion of the Tempter, the words "knowing good and evil" grow dim in the unhallowed splendour of the promise "Ye shall be as gods." All secrets of Nature and of Fate he desires to penetrate, but not in order that he may contemplate their mysteries in philosophic calmness, not that he may possess his soul in the serene light of ascertained primal truths; rather it is for the lordship over men and things which knowledge places in his hands that he chiefly desires it. Logic, law, physic, divinity, have yielded their whole stores into his keeping, but they have left his intellect unsatisfied, craving for acquisitions of a less formal, a more natural and living kind, and they have afforded him no adequate field, and but feeble instruments for the display of the forces of his will. It is magic which with

every discovery to the intellect unites a corresponding gift of power:—

> "'Tis magic, magic that hath ravished me."

What is knowledge worth if it does not enable him to obtain mastery over gross matter, over the lives and fortunes of men, over the elements of air and earth, of fire and water, and over the strong elemental spirits? To be surrounded with proofs and witnesses of the transcendent might of his own will,—this is the ultimate desire of Faustus, as in other circumstances and seeking other manifestations, it was of Tamburlaine. But the scholar does not ever disappear in the magician. In the first heated vision of the various objects towards which the new agency at his command might be turned, projects rise before him of circling Germany with brass, of driving the Prince of Parma from the land, and reigning "sole king of all the provinces;" yet even in that hour there mingle with more vulgar ambitions the ambitions of the thinker and the student; he would have his subject spirits resolve him of all ambiguities, and read to him strange philosophies. The pleasure, which afterwards he seeks, less for its own sake than to banish the hated thought of the approaching future, is the quintessence of pleasure. He is not made for coarse delights. He desires no beauty but that of "the fairest maid in Germany," or the beauty of Helen of Troy:—

> "Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss."

He chooses no song but Homer's song, no music but that of Amphion's harp:—

> "Long ere this I should have slain myself
> Had not sweet pleasure conquer'd deep despair.
> Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
> Of Alexander's love and Œnon's death?
> And hath not he that built the walls of Thebes,
> With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,
> Made music with my Mephistophilis?"

And in the scene of parting with the two scholars, immediately preceding the uncompanioned agony of the doomed man's latest hour—a scene distinguished by a lofty pathos which we find nowhere else in Marlowe—there is throughout an atmosphere of learning, of refinement, of scholarly urbanity, which makes us feel how thoroughly Marlowe had preserved his original conception of the character of Faustus, even while he degraded him to the low conjuror of certain passages, introduced by a writer singularly devoid of humour, to make sport for the groundlings of the theatre.*

A grosser air is breathed throughout "The Jew of Malta." The whole play is murky with smoke of the pit. Evil desires, evil thoughts, evil living, fill its five acts to the full. Nine-tenths of the picture are as darkly shadowed as some shadowy painting of Rembrandt; but, as might also be in one of Rembrandt's paintings, in the centre there is a head relieved against the gloom, lit by what strange light we do not know, unless it be the reflection from piles of gold and gems—a head fascinating and detestable, of majestic proportions, full of intellect, full of malice and deceit, with wrinkled brow, beak-like nose, cruel lips, and eyes that, though half-

* I should be glad to believe that these scenes were the addition of some inferior playwright.

hooded by leathery lids, triumph visibly in the success of something devilish. Barabas is the dedicated child of sin from his mother's womb. As he grew in stature he must have grown in crooked wisdom and in wickedness. His heart is a nest where there is room for the patrons of the seven deadly sins to lodge, but one chief devil is its permanent occupier—Mammon. The lust of money is the passion of the Jew, which is constantly awake and active. His bags are the children of his heart, more loved than his Abigail, and the dearer because they were begotten through deceit or by violence. Yet Barabas is a superb figure. His energy of will is so great; his resources and inventions are so inexhaustible; he is so illustrious a representative of material power and of intellectual. Even his love of money has something in it of sublime, it is so huge a desire. He is no miser treasuring each contemptible coin. Precisely as Tamburlaine looked down with scorn at all ordinary kingships and lordships of the earth, as Faustus held for worthless the whole sum of stored-up human learning in comparison with the infinite knowledge to which he aspired, so Barabas treats with genuine disdain the opulence of common men. The play opens, as "Faustus" does, in an impressive way, discovering the merchant alone in his counting-house, flattering his own sense of power with the sight of his possessions. He sits in the centre of a vast web of commercial enterprises, controlling and directing them all. Spain, Persia, Araby, Egypt, India, are tributary to the Jew. He holds hands with the Christian governor of the island. By money he has become a lord of men, as Tamburlaine did by force, and

Faustus by knowledge, and the winds and the seas that bear his argosies about are his ministers.

It is obvious that the lust of money, and the power that comes by money, form the subject of "The Jew of Malta." We should indeed be straining matters, accommodating them to gain for our exposition an artistic completeness, if we were to say that Barabas desires money only for the power which its possession confers. This, in his worship of gold, is certainly a chief element, but he loves it also for its own sake with a fond extravagance. In the dawn after that night when Abigail rescued his treasures from their hiding-place in his former dwelling, now converted into a Christian nunnery, the old raven hovers amorously over his recovered bags, and sings above them as a lark does above her young. Yet still it is the sense of power regained which puts the sweetest drop into his cup of bliss:—

> "O my girl,
> My gold, my fortune, my felicity,
> Strength to my soul, death to mine enemy!
> Welcome the first beginner of my bliss."

But Marlowe found means in another way to gratify in this play his own passion for power, his pride in the display of the puissance of human will. The opening scene, in which the Jew appears as a great master in the art of money-getting, and surrounded by the works of his hands, in which he is proud, secure, and happy, is quickly succeeded by others in which he is seen stripped of his wealth, turned out of doors by Christian tyranny, and exposed to common ignominy and insult. The rest

of the drama is occupied with the great game which Barabas plays, first against his Christian persecutors, afterwards against his own daughter allied with them, and his dangerous tool Ithamore, the cut-throat slave whom he has bought. His hand is henceforth against every man, and every man's hand against him. When he is hunted he doubles on his pursuers, and for a while escapes; any swine-eating dog that comes too close gets a shrewd bite which stops his cry, and at last, when brought to bay, and when his supreme design has failed by counter-treachery, when fairly hunted down, he turns fiercely on his opponents, is still master of himself and of the situation, and rises above those who watch his death by the grandeur of his resolution.

It has not seemed necessary here to dwell upon all that is worthless, and worse than worthless, in Marlowe's plays—on the midsummer madness of "Tamburlaine," the contemptible buffoonery of "Dr Faustus," and the overloaded sensational atrocities of "The Jew of Malta." Such criticism every one but an Ancient Pistol does for himself. We all recognise the fustian of Marlowe's style, and the ill effects of the demands made upon him by sixteenth-century play-goers for such harlequinade as they could appreciate. A more important thing to recognise is that up to the last Marlowe's great powers were ripening, while his judgment was becoming sane, and his taste purer. He was escaping, as has been already said, from his "Sturm und Drang" when he was lost to the world. "Tamburlaine" was written at the age of twenty-two, "Faustus" two or three years later. At such an age accomplishment is rare; we usually look

for no more than promise. If Shakspere had died at the age when Marlowe died we should have known little of the capacity which lay within him of creating a Macbeth, a Lear, an Othello, a Cleopatra. Marlowe has left us three great ideal figures of Titanic strength and size. That we should say is much. In one particular a most important advance from "Tamburlaine" to "Dr. Faustus" and the later plays is discernible—in versification. His contemporaries appear to have been much impressed by the greatness of his verse—Marlowe's "mighty line;" and it was in the tirades of "Tamburlaine" that blank verse was first heard upon a public stage in England. But in this play the blank verse is like a gorgeous robe of brocade, stiff with golden embroidery; afterwards in his hands it becomes pliable, and falls around the thought or feeling which it covers in nobly significant lines.

Had Marlowe lived longer we may surmise, with some degree of assurance, one, at least, of the subjects which would have engaged his attention—the lust of beauty and the power of beauty. There is very little of amatory writing in any of his plays except that written in conjunction with Nash. Tender love-making of the idyllic or romantic kind Marlowe was little fitted to represent. But we have the clearest evidence from scattered passages that Marlowe had conceived the tyrannous power of beauty in that transcendent way in which he conceived other forms of power. It is sufficient to remind the reader of the scene in which Helena rises before Faustus. And there is one passage in "Tamburlaine" which in itself is enough to show us

that the passionate desire of beauty in its most ideal form was not inexperienced by the poet :—

> "What is beauty, saith my sufferings, then?
> If all the pens that ever poets held
> Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,
> And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
> Their minds, and muses on admirèd themes;
> If all the heavenly quintessence they still
> From their immortal flowers of poesy,
> Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
> The highest reaches of a human wit;
> If these had made one poem's period,
> And all combin'd in beauty's worthiness,
> Yet should there hover in their restless heads,
> One thought, one grace, one wonder at the least,
> Which into words no virtue can digest."

If another passage in "Tamburlaine" :—

> "Still climbing after knowledge infinite,"

announced the poet's Paracelsus, does not this more distinctly announce his never-created Aprile?

THE IDEALISM OF MILTON.

THE critic who would find some single expression which resumes the tendency of each of an artist's works, or an expression which resumes the tendency of all his works taken together, is commonly engaged in falsifying the truth of criticism, and in all cases runs a risk of losing the faithfulness of sympathy, the disengagedness of intelligence, the capacity for assuming various spiritual attitudes which should belong to him. A man will not be comprehended in a formula, nor will the work of a man. But in the case of Milton, and those who resemble him in his method as an artist, this doctrinaire style of criticism is at least not illegitimate. No poem, of course, is reducible to an abstract statement or idea; yet the statement, the idea, may be the germ from which the poem has sprung. A tree glorious with all its leaves and blossoming is much more than the seed in which it lay concealed; yet from the seed, with favourable earth and skies, it grew. Milton never sang as the bird sings, with spontaneous pleasure, through an impulse unobserved and unmodified by the intellect. The intention of each poem is clearly conceived by himself; the form is elaborated with a conscious study of effects. There is in him none of the delicious *imprévu* of Shakspere. Milton's nature never reacted simply and directly, finding utterance in a lyrical cry,

when impressions from the world of nature or of society aroused the faculty of song. The reaction was checked, and did not find expression until he had considered his own feelings, and modified or altered them upon the suggestions of his intellect. Milton's passion is great, but deliberate, approved by his judgment, and he never repents, feeling that repentance would be a confession, not only of sin, but of extreme weakness and fatuity. He is not imaginative in the highest—in Shakspere's—manner. Each character of his masque, his drama, his epics, is an ideal character—a Miltonic abstraction incarnated. He himself is, as much as may be, an ideal personage: his life does not grow in large, vital unconsciousness, but is modelled, sometimes laboriously, after an idea. And consequently his life, like his writings, lacks the *imprévu*. He resolves in early youth that it shall be a great life, and he carries out his resolution unfalteringly from first to last. He tends his own genius, and observes it. He waits for its maturity, and watches. He accepts his powers as trusts from God, and will neither go beyond nor fall short of them. He is noble, but we are sometimes painfully aware that it is a nobleness prepense. He loves to imagine himself in heroic attitudes—as defender of England and of liberty, as the afflicted champion of his people, fallen on evil days. His very recreation is pre-arranged—Mild heaven ordains a time for pleasure.*

In all this Milton was unlike Shakspere; and as the men differed, so did the times. During the brighter years of the Elizabethan period, when life—life of the

* Sonnet to Cyriac Skinner.

intellect, life of the imagination, religious life, life of the nation, and life of the individual—with one great bound had broken through and over the mediæval dykes and dams, and was rushing onwards, somewhat turbid, somewhat violent, yet gaining a law and a majestic order from the mere weight of the advancing mass of waters—at that fortunate time to live was the chief thing, not to adopt and adhere to a theory of living.

> "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven!"

At the time when Milton reached manhood, the unity of this new life of England was broken, and there were two conspicuous theories of life, to one of which each man was compelled to attach himself; two experiments of living, of which each person must assay one; two doctrines in religion, two tendencies in politics, two systems of social conduct and of manners. The large *insouciance* of the earlier fashion of living was gone; everyone could tell why he was what he was.

Thus the character of the period fell in with Milton's natural tendency towards the conscious modelling of his life as a man, and of his works as an artist after certain ideals, types, abstractions. It is not a little remarkable that we have the authority and example of Milton himself for applying to his writings that criticism which looks for an intention or express purpose as the germinal centre of each, and which attempts to discover an unity in them all, resulting from the constant presence of one dominant idea. In the "Defensio Secunda" Milton looks back over his more important prose works, and he finds that they all move in a harmonious system around

a central conception of liberty. An ideal of liberty was that which presided over his public life, his life in the world of action, and the books which were meant to bear upon the world of action refer to that ideal. There are three forms or species of liberty, Milton tells us, which are essential to the happiness of man as a member of society—religious liberty, domestic, civil. From an early period the first of these had occupied his thoughts. "What he had in view when he hesitated to become a clergyman," Professor Masson remarks, "was, in all probability, less the letter of the articles to be subscribed, and of the oaths to be taken, than the general condition of the Church at that particular time." Prelatical tyranny, and the theories by which it was justified, inspired the indignant pamphlets to write which Milton resolutely put poetry aside. Domestic liberty "involves three material questions—the conditions of the conjugal tie, the education of children, and the free publication of one's thoughts." * Each of these was made a subject of distinct consideration—in "Tetrachordon" and other writings on the question of divorce, in the Letter addressed to Samuel Hartlib on education, and in the Speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing. Were it one of Milton's critics, and not Milton himself, who had thus classed the "Areopagitica" amongst the treatises in defence of domestic liberty, or who had represented the letter to Hartlib as concerned with liberty in any of its forms, should we not be ready to declare that he had departed from the sincerity of criticism, and was forcing the author's works at any cost to accord with a theory

* "Defensio Secunda."

of his own? Yet there is no forcing here; there is only the compulsion put upon Milton himself by his dominant idea. Civil liberty occupied him last. He thought at an earlier season that it might be left to the magistrate. It was not until events had proved that his pen might be wielded as a powerful weapon in its defence, that the "Iconoclastes," the "Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio," and the "Defensio Secunda" were produced.

Thus we are directed by Milton himself to observe how the great cycle of his prose works revolves around this controlling idea of liberty. One is tempted to go on, and endeavour to apply this authorised kind of criticism to Milton's poetry. Would it be surprising, or not rather a thing to be expected, if a certain unity of idea became apparent in the work of the poet as in that of the pamphleteer? Milton being what he was, a man governed by ideas, and those ideas being persistent and few—Milton's poetry at the same time dealing with moral truth, and the abiding meanings of things—might we not naturally look for a single chief tendency, a permanent presence of one dominant conception in all his poetical self-utterance, epic and dramatic?

Milton's inner life, of which his poetry is an expression, as his prose is an expression of his outer, public life, was an unceasing tending from evil to good, from base or common to noble, a perpetual aspiration to moral greatness. Not less than Goethe he studied self-culture. But while Goethe, with his deliberate Hellenism, made man an end to himself, Milton, over whom the Hebrew spirit kept jealous guard, considered man at his highest as the creature of God. And in the hierarchy of human

faculties Milton assigned the place of supreme authority, as Goethe never did, to those powers which lie upon the Godward side of our humanity, to those perceptions and volitions which are concerned with moral good and evil. The impartiality of Goethe's self-culture was undisturbed by any vivid sense of sin. No part of his being seemed to him in extreme peril from spiritual foes, no part appeared the object of a fierce assault; it was easy for him to transfer his attention serenely from this side of his nature to that, while with resolute and calm persistence he strove to attain completeness of self-development. To Goethe the world was a gymnasium or academy, and life a period of higher education. The peculiarity of Milton's view was, that before him the world lay as a battle-field, life was a warfare against principalities and powers, and the good man a champion of God. The sense of sin never forsook him, nor that of a glorious possibility of virtue. To Goethe nature presented itself as a harmonious group of influences favourable, upon the whole, towards man; what he chiefly feared was a mistake in his plan of culture, the substituting in his lifelong education of a subordinate power or faculty of his nature for the master power. What Milton feared before all else was disloyalty to God, and a consequent hell; and to him nature, in its most significant aspect, was the scene of an indefatigable antagonism between good and evil. In other words, Milton was essentially a Puritan. In spite of his classical culture, and his Renaissance sense of beauty, he not less than Bunyan saw, as the prime fact of the world, Diabolus at odds with Immanuel. He, as well as

Bunyan, beheld a Celestial City and a City of Destruction, standing remote from each other, with hostile rulers. Milton added, as Bunyan also added, that final victory must lie on the side of good. That is, he asserted eternal Providence. There is a victory, which is God's, not ours; it is our part to cleave to the Eternal One, his part to achieve the triumph on our behalf.

Here we possess the dominant idea which governed the inner life of Milton, and the dominant idea around which revolves the cycle of his poetical works, as that of his prose works revolves around the idea of liberty. There is a mortal battle waged between the powers of good and evil. Therefore in each of Milton's greater poems there are two parties, opposed as light and darkness are opposed, there are hostile forces arrayed for strife on this side and on that. But God is omnipotent, the everlasting Jehovah. There is, therefore, in every instance a victory of the righteous, wrought out for them by Divine help.

In addition to this, let it be borne in mind that Milton, as an artist, works in the manner of an idealist. His starting-point is ordinarily an abstraction. Whereas with Bunyan abstract virtues and vices are perpetually tending to become real persons, with Milton each real person tends to become the representative of an idea or a group, more or less complex, of ideas. Hopeful, and old Honest, and Mr Feeble-Mind, as we read, grow by degrees into actual human beings, who, had we lived two centuries ago, might have been known to us as respected Puritan neighbours. Samson and Dalila, and

not alone these persons of remote Eastern tradition, but Lady Alice Egerton and her brothers,* veritably alive and breathing, are, as Milton shows them, objects (to borrow a phrase of Cardinal Newman) rather of notional than real apprehension.

"Comus" is the work of a youthful spirit, enamoured of its ideals of beauty and of virtue, zealous to exhibit the identity of moral loveliness with moral severity. The real incident from which the mask is said to have originated disengages itself, in the imagination of Milton, from the world of actual occurrences, and becomes an occasion for the dramatic play of his own poetical abstractions. The young English gentlemen cast off their identity and individuality, and appear in the elementary shapes of "First Brother" and "Second Brother." The Lady Alice rises into an ideal impersonation of virgin strength and virtue. The scene is earth, a wild wood; but earth, as in all the poems of Milton, with the heavens arching over it—a dim spot, in which men "strive to keep up a frail and feverish being" set below the "starry threshold of Jove's Court,"

> "Where those immortal shapes
> Of bright aerial spirits live inspher'd
> In regions mild of calm and serene air."

From its first scene to the last the drama is a representation of the trials, difficulties, and dangers to which moral purity is exposed in this world, and of the victory of the better principle in the soul, gained by strenuous human endeavour aided by the grace of God. In this spiritual warfare the powers of good and evil are arrayed

* If, indeed, they be presented in "Comus."

against one another; upon this side the Lady, her brothers (types of human helpfulness weak in itself, and liable to go astray), and the supernatural powers auxiliar to virtue in heaven and in earth—the Attendant Spirit and the nymph Sabrina.

The enchanter Comus is son of Bacchus and Circe, and inheritor of twofold vice. If Milton had pictured the life of innocent mirth in "L'Allegro," here was a picture to set beside the other, a vision of the genius of sensual indulgence. Yet Comus is inwardly, not outwardly foul; no grim monster like that which the mediæval imagination conjured up to terrify the spirit and disgust the senses. The attempt of sin upon the soul as conceived by Milton is not the open and violent obsession of a brute power, but involves a cheat, an imposture. The soul is put upon its trial through the seduction of the senses and the lower parts of our nature. Flattering lies entice the ears of Eve; Christ is tried by false visions of power and glory, and beneficent rule; Samson is defrauded of his strength by deceitful blandishment. And in like manner Comus must needs possess a beauty of his own, such beauty as ensnares the eye untrained in the severe school of moral perfection. Correggio sought him as a favourite model, but not Michael Angelo. He is sensitive to rich forms and sweet sounds, graceful in oratory, possessed, like Satan, of high intellect, but intellect in the service of the senses; he surrounds himself with a world of art which lulls the soul into forgetfulness of its higher instincts and of duty; his palace is stately, and "set out with all manner of deliciousness."

Over against this potent enchanter stands the virginal figure of the Lady, who is stronger than he. Young men, themselves conscious of high powers, and who are more truly acquainted with admiration than with love, find the presence of strength in woman invincibly attractive. Shakspere, in his earlier dramatic period, delighted to represent such characters as Rosalind, and Beatrice, and Portia; characters at once stronger and weaker than his Imogens and Desdemonas, —stronger because more intellectual, weaker because less harmoniously feminine. Shelley, who was never other than young, exhibited different types of heroic womanly nature, as conceived by him, in Cyntha of "The Revolt of Islam," and in Beatrice Cenci. Something of weakness belongs to the Lady of Milton's poem, because she is a woman, accustomed to the protection of others, tenderly nurtured, with a fair and gentle body; but when the hour of trial comes she shows herself strong in powers of judgment and of reasoning, strong in her spiritual nature, in her tenacity of moral truth, in her indignation against sin. Although alone, and encompassed by evil and danger, she is fearless, and so clear-sighted that the juggling practice of her antagonist is wholly ineffectual against her. There is much in the Lady which resembles the youthful Milton himself—he, the Lady of his college—and we may well believe that the great debate concerning temperance was not altogether dramatic (where, indeed, is Milton truly dramatic?), but was in part a record of passages in the poet's own spiritual history. Milton admired the Lady as he admired the ideal which he projected before him of

himself. She is, indeed, too admirable to be an object of cherishing love. We could almost prolong her sufferings to draw a more complete enthusiasm from the sight of her heroic attitude.

The Lady is unsubdued, and indeed unsubduable, because her will remains her own, a citadel without a breach; but "her corporal rind" is manacled, she is set in the enchanted chair and cannot leave it. Richardson, an artist who like Milton wrought in the manner of the idealists, conceived a similar situation in his Clarissa. To subdue the will of the noble and beautiful woman against whom he has set himself is as much the object of Lovelace as to gain possession of her person. His mastery over her outward fate grows steadily from less to more, until at length it is absolute; but her true personality (and Richardson never lets us forget this) remains remote, untouched, victorious, and her death itself is not defeat, but a well-conducted retreat from this life to a position of greater security and freedom. Meanwhile,—to return to "Comus,"—the brothers wander in the wood. They are alike in being aimless and helpless; if they are distinguished from each other, it is only as "First Brother" and "Second Brother," and by one of the simple devices common to ideal artists—first brother is a philosopher and full of hope and faith; second brother is more apprehensive, and less thoroughly grounded in ethics and metaphysics. The deliverance of their sister would be impossible but for supernatural interposition, the aid afforded by the Attendant Spirit from Jove's court. In other words, Divine Providence is asserted. Not without higher than

human aid is the Lady rescued, and through the weakness of the mortal instruments of divine grace but half the intended work is accomplished. Comus escapes bearing his magic wand, to deceive other strayers in the wood, to work new enchantments, and swell his rout of ugly-headed followers.

Little need be said of "Paradise Lost"; the central idea is obvious. There is again a great contention, Heaven and Hell striving for the mastery. Satan and his angels are warring, first tumultuously and afterwards by crafty ways, against God and Messiah, and the executors of God's purposes. Each of the infernal Thrones and Dominations is an ideal conception, the representative of a single living lust. Satan himself is *the spirit of disobedience*, that supreme sin of which all other sins are but modes; he is a will alienated from God, and proudly accepting such alienation as the law of his nature. Man's virtue is placed upon its trial. Paradise, so far from being the peaceful garden, is the central battle-field of the whole universe. Adam falls, and evil for a time appears to have gained the day; but such an appearance must needs be fallacious—the woman contains within her the seed of promise, the great Deliverer who shall bruise the serpent's head. To "assert eternal Providence" is the declared intention of the whole work. It closes, if in no triumphant strain, yet in a spirit of serious confidence concerning the future:—

> "Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wiped them soon;
> The world was all before them, where to choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:

> They hand in hand, with wand'ring steps and slow,
> Through Eden took their solitary way."

By the time "Paradise Lost" was written, Milton had known love as distinct from admiration, the attraction not of identical but of complementary qualities. The novel delight of surrender to a charm, the charm of a being weaker and fairer than himself, had been enough, and he had not provided for the difficulties of accommodating this new self-surrender to the self-maintenance which was his natural and his habitual temper. Ere long the discovery was made of feminine frailty.. The Lady of "Comus" had been created out of elements which belonged to his own character. Eve was created out of all that he was not and could not be. The Lady is admirable; Eve is supremely desirable. If the Lady had been seduced by the fraud of Comus, and had fallen, we should leave her among the monsters, and despair of goodness; but Eve, when she has eaten the apple, is hardly less lovable than before, and we know that hardly any fall is fatal to a character like hers, which has no inexorable virtue; it bends, but is not broken. "Eve is a kind of abstract woman; essentially a typical being; an official mother of all living." She is the Miltonic conception of the "eternal feminine" (*das Ewig-Weibliche*) in nature.

What passage in the life of Christ would Milton select for treatment as the subject of his second epic? Paradise had been forfeited by the disobedience of Adam; by the perfect obedience of the Son of God it was recovered. The supreme act of submission to his Father's will was surely his obedience unto death, "even the death of the

cross." "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done." The contrast is absolute between such obedient fidelity as this, and the wilfulness and disloyalty of the first Adam. And when Christ had suffered death, and despoiled hell, and risen again, then Paradise was truly and completely regained. Yet it is not the passion, the death, and the triumphant resurrection of the Saviour which Milton determined to render into song. Does the reader not feel a certain incongruity in the appropriating of this name "Paradise Regained" to a poem which leaves Christ at the outset of his earthly career, with his crown of thorns yet to wear, and his cross to be borne to Calvary? Not so did Milton feel. To him the first complete victory over Satan was equivalent to the final overthrow of the kingdom of darkness, and the restoration of the reign of all goodness. The great warfare was then brought to an issue—then, for the first time—and that issue was decisive. Satan had found one mightier than he in the Divine Man. Now, obviously, no passage in the life of Christ illustrates in such naked contrast the struggle between the powers of good and of evil as the assault made upon the virtue of Christ himself by the arch-enemy. Victory in such a contest must be ultimate victory. This, therefore, naturally from Milton's point of view became the subject of "Paradise Regained."

In treating the history of the temptation in the wilderness, the genius of the poet moved under peculiar advantages. Milton was never dramatic in the high sense of that word. Varying, vital movement of thought

and passion he was unable to exhibit. The mystery and obscurity of life do not belong to the characters created by him. Each of them is perfectly intelligible. But Milton excelled in the representation of characters in *position*, and more particularly in the discussion of a "topic" by two characters who occupy fixed and opposing points of view. This was not dialogue; there is no giving and taking of ideas, no shifting of positions, no fluctuant moods, no mobility of thought. It was rather debate, a forensic pleading, with counsel on this side and on that. It was a duel, not with rapiers gleaming under and over each other, and in a moment's irregular strife changing hands—not such a duel, but one much more deliberate, the antagonists alternately letting off their heavy charges of argument, and alternately awaiting the formidable reply. "Paradise Regained" is a series of such debates, which remind us of the scene between Comus and the Lady in Milton's early poem, where already the Miltonic manner appears fully formed.

By obedience Christ regains paradise. Loyalty to God, fidelity to the righteous father, is the supreme excellence of his character; its strength is not Pagan self-dependence, but Hebrew self-devotion to the Eternal One. The consciousness of filial virtue, of the union of his will with that of the Father, supports him through every trial. At the same time this obedience, unlike that claimed from Adam, does not lie in the passive accepting of an arbitrary rule. The Saviour is a champion of God. He is filled, like the ancient heroes of the Jewish race, with active zeal for the glory of God, and his people's service:—

> "Virtuous deeds
> Flamed in my heart, heroic acts; one while
> To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke;
> Then to subdue and quell, o'er all the earth,
> Brute violence and proud tyrannic pow'r,
> Till truth were freed, and equity restored."

He is a worthy leader of mankind in the great warfare against sin and death, greater in his virtue than Adam could possibly have been, because the virtue of Christ is generous and aspiring, not mere obedience for obedience' sake. Such an antagonist no power of evil could withstand. Satan is not only foiled, but crushingly defeated. The purpose and the promise of God are fulfilled. As the poem closes, we hear the anthems of angelic quires sung for the victory of the righteous cause.

"Samson Agonistes" remains to be briefly studied. Once again there is the antagonism of good and evil. God, the people of God, and their afflicted chieftain are set over against Dagon, his impious crew of worshippers, the enchantress Dalila, and the champion of the Philistines, the giant Harapha. It is apparently an unequal warfare. Samson is blind—

> "Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
> Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves"—

and his nation is likewise in bondage. God's order seems to be reversed. It is the hour of Dagon's triumph. Worst of all, it was by the moral weakness of their leader that the people of Israel had fallen. But Adam had sinned and was an exile from Paradise, and yet God's order stood. Christ was in the wilderness in his humiliation, cold and hungry, drenched with rain, environed by the powers of hell. The Lady sat

enthralled by the spells of her deadly enemy, alone in the midst of a rout of unclean creatures, and yet deliverance had been wrought. And now the chosen nation, God's representative among the peoples, was but tried and afflicted for a time. A sudden and awful victory is achieved on their behalf. And once again the choral song which ends the tragedy is a confession of a divine order of things, an assertion of eternal Providence:—

> "All is best, though we oft doubt
> What th' unsearchable dispose
> Of highest Wisdom brings about,
> And ever best found in the close."

What is Samson? He is the man gifted with divine strength; one who is great by the grace of God, yet a mortal, and therefore liable to fall. As Milton's first important dramatic conception, the Lady, is wrought out of materials supplied from his own character and inner experience, so is this, the last. But as the beautiful youth, a poet more than a fighter, full of noble hopes and unrealized aspirations, differed from the aged man who had warred a good warfare, who had known disappointment and defeat, and now was fallen on evil days, so widely does Samson differ from Milton's first glad ideal. The transformation is a strange one, and yet we recognise the one same personality. Samson's manner of self-contemplation is precisely that of Milton. He loves to present to his own imagination the glory of his strength, the greatness of his past achievements, and his present afflicted state. This strength which he possesses he looks upon as Milton from his early years was

accustomed to look upon his own extraordinary powers —as something entrusted to him, of which he must render an account. It is his sorrow that such a noble gift should be compelled to base uses, and be made the gaze and scorn of his enemies. But no suffering is so cruel as the memory of his folly. Had Milton ever been betrayed into such weakness as that of Samson he would have felt precisely as Samson feels. The single fall is fatal and irrecoverable. He is not one of those who, under the influence of time, and the world, and changing action, can slip back into his self-respect. Being despicable once, he must be always despicable. The thought of an honourable death, self-inflicted, yet not criminal nor weakly sought, must have been the one partial assuagement of his grief that ever came to him. In this death which befalls Samson there is something deeper than poetical justice. It brings peace and consolation, and "calm of mind, all passion spent," as nothing else could. It is the witness of God to the faithfulness, through all weakness and folly, of his champion.

Harapha, the Philistine giant, is so unmistakably contrasted with Samson, that it is impossible to miss Milton's intention. Samson is the man gifted with divine strength; Harapha is the type of the fleshly strength of this world, insolent and brutal. He is the force which Christ in his ardent youth burned to subdue over all the earth,—

> "Brute violence and proud tyrannic power."

It was Harapha after the restoration of Charles who

insulted the bodies of Cromwell and Ireton and Bradshaw. It is Harapha who still rules wherever material power is dissociated from moral and spiritual. He is boastful, pitiless, vulgar, and, with all his insolence, in the presence of divine strength he is a coward. Let the Chorus interpret for us the significance of the meeting of the two champions:—

> "Oh, how comely it is and how reviving
> To the spirits of just men long opprest!
> When God into the hands of their deliverer
> Puts invincible might
> To quell the mighty of the earth, th' oppressor,
> The brute and boist'rous force of violent men
> Hardy and industrious to support
> Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
> The righteous and all such as honour truth;
> He all their ammunition
> And feats of war defeats,
> With plain heroic magnitude of mind
> And celestial vigour arm'd."

The brute violence of the flesh has for its appropriate ally the deceitful beauty of the flesh, full of vanity, and lust, and cruelty. Such beauty has now lost all its fascination for Samson. Even Harapha is less intolerable than Dalila—"Out, out, hyæna!" The Lady of "Comus" was created out of all that Milton conceived as admirable; Eve out of all in woman that is desirable; Dalila out of all that is detestable. Her feminine curiosity, her feminine love of dress—she comes towards the blind prisoner "with all her bravery on"—her fleshly desire, her incapacity for any noble thought, her feigned religion, her honeyed words implying the weakness and fatuity of him whom she addresses, her wifely

treachery and hard-heartedness, make up a personality which, above all others, must have been hateful to Milton. Shakspere would have smiled, and secretly accepted the enchantress as a fruitful subject of study. Milton brings her upon the scene only to expose her, and drive her away with most genuine indignation. The Lady, Eve, Dalila—these are the women of Milton; each a great ideal figure, one dedicated to admiration, one to love, and the last to loathing.

We have now gone the round of Milton's poetical works. A line will recapitulate the substance of this essay. Milton works from the starting-point of an idea, and two such ideas brought into being what he accomplished as a man and as an artist. His prose works, the outcome of his life of public action, have for their ideal centre a conception of human liberty. His poetical works, the outcome of his inner life, his life of artistic contemplation, are various renderings of one dominant idea—that the struggle for mastery between good and evil is the prime fact of life; and that a final victory of the righteous cause is assured by the existence of a divine order of the universe, which Milton knew by the name of "Providence."

MR BROWNING'S "SORDELLO."

[A fragment from this article on "Sordello" appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* for 1867, in which year the whole was written. Some paragraphs from the article then printed were transferred in an expanded form to the essay on "Tennyson and Browning" in my "Studies on Literature." These paragraphs therefore I omit here, with the exception of two or three, which are necessary to place "Sordello" in position with reference to some leading ideas of Mr Browning. In 1867 it was customary to speak of "Sordello" as being wholly unintelligible; and although it may now be considered more correct to speak of it as a model of lucidity, I have a suspicion that many people still find it hard to understand. I print the article because it is a rendering of the poem into prose, lying closer to the original than any other that I have seen, and because as such it may be helpful to some readers of Mr Browning.]

MUCH has been recently written concerning the poems of Mr Browning, but no serious attempt has been made to give an account of his largest work. It was on all hands briefly dismissed as unintelligible. Here is a singular fact: Mr Browning is declared by his contemporaries to be a distinguished poet, a profound and original thinker; and when we ask, "What of his most laborious undertaking?" the answer of his ablest critic is, "We do not at all doubt that Mr Browning understands his own drift clearly enough," but "probably no man or woman except the author ever yet understood it;" and "We suspect that if it be true, as his dedication appears to indicate, that there is really one mortal who to his own satisfaction has understood Mr Browning in Sordello, it would be found on cross-

examination of that one, that (like Hegel's sole philosophical confidant) even he has *mis*understood him." So wrote an admirable critic in the *National Review*. And what says Mr Browning himself? That the poem is one which the many may not like, but which the few must: that he imagined it with so clear a power of vision, and so faithfully declared what he saw, that no material change can be made in it without injury; and that though the faults of expression are numerous, they are such as "with care for a man or book" may be surmounted.* The truth on the critic's side—not a very profitable truth—has perhaps received adequate consideration in the last twenty-seven years; we may now with a good conscience try to see the truth on the author's side, which may happen to be more productive.

One word on the obscurity of "Sordello. It arises not so much from peculiarities of style, and the involved structure of occasional sentences, as from the unrelaxing demand which is made throughout upon the intellectual and imaginative energy and alertness of the reader. This constant demand exhausts the power of attention in a short time, and the mind is unable to sustain its watchfulness and sureness of action, so that if we

* "My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might, instead of what the few must like; but after all I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave it as I find it."—*Dedication of Sordello to J. Milsand of Dijon.* M. Milsand's article on Mr Browning's poetry which appeared many years ago in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, may still be read with advantage.

read much at a sitting we find the first few pages clear and admirable, while the last three or four over which the eye passes before we close the book leave us bewildered and jaded. The truth is, Mr Browning has given too much in his couple of hundred pages; there is not a line of the poem which is not as full of matter as a line can be; so that if the ten syllables sometimes seem to start and give way under the strain, we need not wonder. We come to no places in "Sordello" where we can rest and dream or look up at the sky. Ideas, emotions, images, analyses, descriptions, still come crowding on. There is too much of everything; we cannot see the wood for the trees. Towards the end of the third book Mr Browning interrupts the story that he may "pause and breathe." That is an apt expression; but Mr Browning seems unable to slacken the motion of his mind, and during this breathing-space heart and brain, perceptive and reflective powers, are almost more busily at work than ever.

Before proceeding to trace in detail the story of "Sordello," including what the author has called "the incidents in the development of a soul," it will be right to indicate the place of "Sordello" amongst the poems of Mr Browning, and to make clear its purport as a whole. "Sordello" is a companion poem of "Paracelsus," five years after the publication of which it appeared, and no one can possess himself of the ideas of Mr Browning without a study of the two. "Je sens en moi l'infini" exclaimed Napoleon one day, with his hand upon his breast. "Je sens en moi l'infini," is the germ-idea of these poems. An account of Mr Browning

as a thinker would be an insufficient account of his genius, for he is also an artist. But more than almost any other poet he is an intellectual artist, and especially in "Paracelsus" and "Sordello" he worked—worked too much, perhaps—under the guidance of ideas, abstract views of character, or the translation into intellectual theorems of the instincts of the heart, too little perhaps through a pure sympathy with life in some of its individual, concrete forms. If any artist may be said to embody in his work a clearly defined system of thought, this may be said of Mr Browning; a system, however, which is not manufactured by logic, but the vital growth of his whole nature in an intellectual direction.

Man here on earth, according to the central and controlling thought of Mr Browning, man here in a state of preparation for other lives, and surrounded by wondrous spiritual influences, is too great for the sphere that contains him, while at the same time he can exist only by submitting for the present to the conditions it imposes; never without fatal loss becoming content with such submission, or regarding those conditions as final. Our nature here is unfinished, imperfect; but its glory, its peculiarity—that which makes us men, not God and not brutes—lies in this very character of imperfection, giving scope as it does for indefinite growth and progress. This progress is at the present time commonly thought of as progress of the race; Mr Browning does not forget this, but he dwells chiefly upon the progress of the individual. Now a man may commit either of two irretrievable errors; through temptations of sense and other causes, but most frequently through

supineness of heart, or brain, or hand, or else through prudential motives, he may renounce his future, spiritual, infinite life and its concerns. That is one error. Or he may try to force those concerns, and corresponding states of thought, feeling, and endeavour into the present material life, the life of limitation and of inadequate and imperfect resources. That is the other. He may deny his higher nature, which is ever yearning upward to God through all high forms of human thought, emotion, and action; he may weary of failure, which is his glory (as generating a higher tendency), and fall back upon a limited and improgressive perfection; or else he may spurn at the conditions of existence, and endeavour to realise in this life what is work for eternity. To deny heaven and the infinite life—that is one extreme; to deny earth and the finite life—that is the other. If we are content with the limited and perishable joys, and gifts and faculties of the world, we see not God and never shall see him. If, on the contrary, we aim at accomplishing under all the restrictions of this life the work of eternity—if we desire absolute knowledge or none at all, infinite love or no love, a boundless exercise of our will, the manifestation of our total power, or no exercise of our will—then we shall either destroy ourselves, dash ourselves to pieces against the walls of time and space, or else, seeing that our objects are unattainable, sink into a state of hopeless enervation. But between these two extremes lies a middle course, and in it will be found the true life of man. He must not rest content with earth and the gifts of earth; he must not aim at "thrusting in time eternity's concern;" but he must

perpetually grasp at things which are just within, or almost without his reach, and, having attained them, find that they are unsatisfying; so that by an endless series of aspirations and endeavours, which generate new aspirations and new endeavours, he may be sent on to God and Christ and heaven.

To these central ideas belong "Paracelsus" (published 1835), "Sordello" (1840), and "Easter Day" (1850). In each we read "a soul's tragedy." Paracelsus aspires to absolute knowledge, and to power based on such knowledge, the attainment of which is forbidden by the conditions of our existence. In the same poem, a second phase of the same error—that of refusing for the present to submit to the terms of life—is represented in Aprile, who would "*love* infinitely and be loved"; the boundlessness of his desires produces a disdain of such attainments and accomplishments as are possible on this earth; his ideal being beyond possibility of realisation, he rejects all the means of life since they are proved inadequate to his aspirations, and rejects the results of life because they are limited and imperfect; he cannot stoop from his sublime isolation in a world of dreams to task himself for the good of his fellows, and he sinks into a state of hopeless enervation. Paracelsus is a victim of the temptations of an aspiring *intellect;* Aprile, of the temptations of a yearning, passionate *heart.* Mr Browning decided to complete our view of this side of the subject by showing the failure of an attempt to manifest the infinite scope, and realise the infinite energy of *will,* the inability of a great nature to deploy all its magnificent resources, and by compelling men in

some way or other to acknowledge that nature as their master, to gain a full sense of its existence. With this purpose he wrote "Sordello."

But the same subject has another side, and this also Mr Browning felt himself bound to present. It was the error of Paracelsus, and Aprile, and Sordello to endeavour to overleap the limitations of life, or to force within those limits an infinity of knowledge, emotion, or volition, which they are unable to contain. It is no less an error to content one's self with the present conditions of our existence, to cease straining beyond them towards the highest object of thought, love, and desire—in a word, to God. And here is the side of the subject which is regarded in "Easter Day." Why is the condemnation of the soul by God in that dream inevitable? Because the speaker failed in his dream in the probation of life, accepted the finite joys and aims of earth, each with some taint in it, as sufficient and final, and never grasped at or yearned towards the heavenly influences and joys, that flitted faint and rare above the earthly, but which were taintless, and therefore best.

We have seized the subject of "Sordello" as it appears in the ultimate analysis. Let us now go briefly over the story, and recount "the incidents in the development of a soul."

Scene: First Mantua and its neighbourhood; afterwards, Verona and Ferrara. Time: about 1225, or forty years before the birth of Dante. Dramatis personæ: Azzo, Lord of Este, and Count Richard of St Boniface, Prince of Verona—Guelphs; Ecelin Romano, Vicar of the Emperor in Italy, and his supporter,

Taurello Salinguerra—Ghibellins; and others, men and women, of whom we shall hear.

Not many miles from Mantua, having traversed a pine forest, you drop suddenly into a little vale, Goito by name, surrounded by a few low mountains, and bright with vines, through which you may wind to a castle in the midst. Here more than twenty years before the date which has been given, might be seen wandering beneath the vines, or on the hill-tops, or standing on one of the breezy parapets of the castle, a slender boy in the dress of a page, with a noble and finely chiselled face—our hero, Sordello. Here he lives, cared for only by some old women-servants who wait on the mistress of the castle, Adelaide, the second wife of Ecelin, and on the maiden Palma, Ecelin's daughter by his former wife, Agnes Este.

Who is Sordello? All his life, as far back as the boy can remember, was spent within the circle of these hills. But he was not always here. He has heard how in a night tumult at Vicenza, when the Ghibellin quarters were attacked and set on fire by Guelphs, Adelaide with her infant son was rescued from the flames by Sordello's father, a poor archer, who himself perished, but left this child whom Adelaide, in gratitude to her preserver, took charge of and brought up in her castle of Goito. On that same night of the Guelph attack perished also the wife and newborn son of the Ghibellin chieftain, Taurello, ever since which event he fell voluntarily into a subordinate position, became the instrument of Ecelin, ceased to scheme on his own account, and took life unambitiously and pleasantly however it came to him: now in

the form of havoc and sudden bloodshed when Guelphs were in the way, now in that of festal ceremonies, bull-baits, dances of jongleurs, and songs of troubadours—a portly, easy-natured soldier.

Before we proceed with the story let us pause to say a word about Sordello's nature, physical and spiritual, forgetting that he is still but a child. His physical organisation is of that fine susceptible kind which a poet might possess.

> "His face
> —— Look, now he turns away! Yourselves shall trace
> (The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,
> A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
> With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive
> Delight at every sense; you can believe
> Sordello foremost in the regal class
> Nature has broadly severed from her mass
> Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
> Some happy lands that have luxurious names,
> For loose fertility; a footfall there
> Suffices to upturn to the warm air
> Half-germinating spices; mere decay
> Produces richer life; and day by day
> New pollen on the lily-petal grows;
> And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.
> You recognise at once the finer dress
> Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
> At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled
> (As though she [Nature] would not trust them with her world)
> A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,
> And lets but half the sun look fervid through."

By two very different classes of spiritual natures this physical organisation, which fits a man for the perception and feeling of beauty, may be possessed. There are those lovers of beauty who are born to be worshippers of something outside themselves, whether it be the sub-

duing loveliness of earth and sky, or of some heroic character, or of some noble cause, or of God himself. They are born to be worshippers, and to lose themselves in what they worship, endowing the object of their homage with all high gifts of their own souls, and bowing down before it, as if it possessed by an inherent right those qualities which are of their own bestowal. The second class consists of those who recognise in their own natures a power superior to all that exists outside of themselves, and who with each new revealment of beauty, or goodness, or strength, or wisdom, make discovery of some new quality of their own souls heretofore undeveloped or unperceived. These are not the worshipping spirits; they are characterised not by a predominance of love but of *will;* they would subdue all things to themselves; their claims on life are boundless, and they compel life (unless failure overtake them) to yield up to their sublime self-assertion untried forms of beauty, goodness, knowledge, power; and thus they vindicate the rights of humanity, thus they raise the standard of the general demands on life and the gifts of life, so that we all, to the meanest of us, may in the end follow them with our more bounded wills.

Now what is the special need of a nature belonging to this second class? Is it not some means of self-display,—self-display not through any motive of vanity, but because human will gains recognition of itself by its effects? What I have *done,* however slight, declares to me that I have *willed;* the torn petals of a rose which I have plucked to pieces assure me of the presence of my living will; much ampler is the assurance which the

impression of my will upon the men and women who surround me may afford. The lover heart-whole in his worship is never troubled by doubts of his own truth; but sudden failings of spirit come to him whose faith is in himself and his own will; he looks out tremblingly to ascertain that others do not consider that he has urged false claims; he requires to see himself mirrored in external men and things; he must always live before a crowd.

Such is the special requirement of a nature belonging to this second class—of which Sordello is a member. And now what are its peculiar dangers and temptations? They are two, leading in precisely opposite directions. Such a man as Sordello may perceive that the world is too narrow a place to admit of a perfect manifestation of himself, that human life with its thousand limitations is too small to contain the workings of the powers of his soul, and that the means of life are too feeble to be their instruments. This perception may result in a mood of fatal *enervation*. He may decline the duty of toiling for the good of men, because the conditions imposed on human existence forbid the full realisation of his aims; he may despise the poor successes which are possible; he may perform no other achievements than the transcendent but easy triumphs of a dream. Or, again, he may err in an opposite way. He may be possessed with a desire to put forth all his powers in this sphere of human life which is too narrow to contain them, a desire to display completely here the resources of a nature which can find scope for its full development only hereafter,

> "Thrusting in time eternity's concern,"

and so bring ruin upon himself, and scatter ruin on all around him. "Je sens en moi l'infini," exclaimed Napoleon.

Now let the reader place Sordello in the second class described above, and bear in mind the special requirement and the peculiar temptations of that class; he will then be at the right point for understanding the narrative, and studying "the incidents in the development of a soul."

We return to Goito and the boy who wanders about its castle. And, first, his time passes in the healthy, unconscious life of a child, each day's new sights and sounds sufficing for the day, with natural enjoyment of sun, air, and sleep. After the manner of imaginative children living in solitude, he makes companionship of whatever objects he finds around him—flowers, trees, birds, insects,—animating and giving them personality according to the caprices of his individual fancy, with no guidance from the catholic feeling which has found expression in our nursery anthology. Everything becomes vassal to his fancy, and by the most incalculable passages of mind and freaks of association he connects one thing with another till an entire imaginary world surrounds him.

> "Conceive! the orpine-patch
> Blossoming earliest on the log-house thatch
> The day those archers wound along the vines—
> Related to the Chief that left their lines
> To climb with clinking step the northern stair
> Up to the solitary chambers where
> Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall;
> He o'er-festooning every interval,
> As the adventurous spider, making light
> Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,

> From barbican to battlement; so flung
> Fantasies forth and in their centre swung
> Our architect,—the breezy morning fresh
> Above, and merry,—all his waving mesh
> Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged."

Thus his days glide away sunnily, while he grows up selfish enough, and without the feeblest moral sense, for what was there to tell the boy that others desired a portion of his happiness?

Time at length puts an end to this period of waking dreams. The objects around him become perhaps too familiar to accept of new transformations, surprises, and disguises from the child's fancy, and they settle down into their everyday shapes. The poppy appears to him, after all, a poppy and nothing more; bird and beast are no longer friends or enemies whom he may watch with wondering awe, and love, and admiration, and hope, and fear; they have sunk into mere bird and beast. And Sordello perceives that it was his own creative faculty which had endowed them with their peculiar attributes. Now the time is come when the boy cannot be satisfied without doing and being something himself. And he needs some companions more competent to allow his claims, and admire his performances than were the flowers and birds. Finding no such companions really at hand he is compelled to create them once again, and he returns to the world of dreams.

But now the crowd with which he surrounds himself is one of men and women, for such witnesses of his exploits he at present requires. All persons whom he has seen,—his mistress, Adelaide, the golden-haired maiden Palma, the aged foreign women servants who

wait upon them, the archers who one day wound through the vine-paths to the castle; all persons of whom he has heard,—Ecelin, Este, the Pope, the Emperor, now press before him, a stream of life-like figures. Each is conspicuous by some special attribute or power, conspicuous by the embodiment or possession of beauty, or wisdom, or strength, or goodness; each is played off against the others, and made to pronounce an estimate of the worth of the others' several qualities; and thus Sordello is feeling his way through much inexperience to that ideal of perfect human faculties and attainments which he would in his own person exhibit, and the possession of which he would assure himself of by the recognition which, as manifested in himself, it would obtain from others. Now when the boy bends his slight bow it is as a crusader against imaginary enemies of the faith; when he climbs the steep above the vines it is the Trentine pass through which he marches as vicar of the emperor; all is still a dream he knows; but a day may come when he shall find means of action corresponding to his will, a body fitted to his soul.

Testing the powers and qualities of men in this way the pageant of his dream thins, and instead of each figure remaining the possessor of *one* distinguishing attribute, beauty and strength and wisdom now unite themselves in a single person, so that all the abilities and graces of men are summed up in two or three ideals of manhood. At last from these emerges one transcendent form in which the perfection of human nature is embodied,—that form which is to be exhibited in

Sordello himself. What name shall we give to this ideal? Can we say better than that as the antique world had discovered before him, so now Sordello has discovered Apollo? This ideal of manhood, this *Apollo*, as we may call it, Sordello will be, and no other. It was as Apollo he ascended the bed of the mountain stream in the depth of June, and looked down upon the forests and fields of vines which his fancy magnified and ennobled into an external world of dimensions suited to his new ideal self, and when hours afterwards

> "Aloft would hang
> White summer-lightnings; as it sank and sprang
> To measure, that whole palpitating breast
> Of heaven, 'twas Apollo, nature prest
> At eve to worship."

And for his Daphne who so fit and fair as Palma?

> "Conspicuous in his world
> Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses curled
> Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound
> About her like a glory! even the ground
> Was bright as with spilt sunbeams; breathe not, breathe
> Not!—poised, see, one leg doubled underneath,
> Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,
> Rests, but the other, listlessly below,
> O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,
> The vein-streaks swoln a richer violet where
> The languid blood lies heavily; yet calm
> On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,
> As but suspended in the act to rise
> By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes
> Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets
> Apollo's gaze in the pine glooms."

But time is stealing away. Sordello is no longer a boy; he is in the prime of youth, and as yet nothing is really done!

> "Lean he grows and pale,
> Though restlessly at rest."

At last an accident happens which breaks up Sordello's "mixed content," and leads him towards the true business of men. Adelaide and Palma have left Goito for the neighbouring Mantua, where amongst other amusements and festivities they are to preside at a Court of Love which Richard of St Boniface (a suitor for Palma's hand) is to hold, and which is to conclude with a lay sung by the illustrious troubadour Eglamor. With the bubble of his fancy grown great and bright, Sordello wanders through the woods towards Mantua, picturing to himself a scene in which he himself gains Palma, and receives confession of her love with crowds to witness his triumph, and in the presence of Richard, the rejected suitor. The bubble, when greatest and brightest, bursts. Emerging beyond a screen of pine-trees, he beholds a crowd of real men and women, gay and noisy, round a pavilion. Real men and women, and Sordello is offered no homage; he, born to be adored, suddenly discovers that he is weak, scarcely a match for any one he sees. And yet there abides within him a consciousness of untried powers, and he would not exchange this potential supremacy of his for the best of their actual endowments. We shall see whether something after all may not be realised.

Palma and Adelaide appear, but not Richard. Richard's troubadour, however, the famous Eglamor, is ready with his lute to sing. "Elys" (*El lys*, the lily) is the ideal subject and the name of Eglamor's poem; and he images in verse according to his ability this his type of perfection. While he is singing Sordello's brain swims, for he recognises in the subject

of the poem the tale of *Apollo*. And his own ideal of human graces and abilities embodied in a person is nobler than that of the minstrel. Eglamor, one of the worshipping spirits, one born for self-forgetful devotion to some object outside himself, one to whom poetry is "a temple-worship vague and vast," who is proud of his service, humble as it is, to ideal beauty, and has his life and joy in it alone, is in all this the opposite of Sordello; and the latter, whose self-possessed genius bears to Eglamor's some such relation as Goethe's might be said to bear to Shelley's, sees how in the poem to which he listens he could supply

> "Each foolish gap and chasm
> The minstrel left in his enthusiasm."

Accordingly Eglamor has no sooner ceased than Sordello takes the lute, advances, and adopting the names and time and place that appeared in Eglamor's poem, begins and hastens through the "true lay with the true end," substituting his own type of perfection for that of the poet on whom the people's applause has just been showered. By the time his song is ended, a real victory has been achieved by him at last:

> "The cries,
> The crowding round, and proffering the prize!
> (For he had gained some prize)—He seemed to shrink
> Into a sleepy crowd, just at whose brink
> One sight withheld him. There sat Adelaide,
> Silent; but at her knees the very maid
> Of the North Chamber,* her red lips as rich,
> The same pure fleecy hair; one weft of which,
> Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er
> She leant, speaking some six words and no more.

* Palma, whom Sordello had seen in the north chamber of the castle.

He answered something, anything; and she
Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily
Upon him, her neck's warmth and all. Again
Moved the arrested magic; in his brain
Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,
And greater glare, until the intense flare
Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense.
And when he woke 'twas many a furlong thence,
At home; the sun shining his ruddy wont;
The customary birds' chirp; but his front
Was crowned—was crowned! Her scented scarf around
His neck!"

A week is passed by Sordello—the quiet of Goito around him—in sucking the sweet out of every circumstance of the achievement. As he wanders out one morning, he hears the sound of chanting which approaches through the woods, and soon appears a company of jongleurs and trouvères bearing to burial the body of Eglamor. The shock of his own discomfiture and of Sordello's sudden triumph had been too much for the simple and fervid heart of the poet. He had lost all—his purpose, his rank, his very life.

"Yet envy sank
Within him, as he heard Sordello out,
And, for the first time, shouted—tried to shout
Like others, not from any zeal to show
Pleasure that way; the common sort did so,
And what was Eglamor? who, bending down
The same, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,
Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,
Left one great tear on it, then joined his band."

There was no envy in Eglamor's heart, but no one recognised the fact that he was defeated so clearly as himself. That night he slept, and never woke again. And now, chanting a funeral song, the trouvères bear

the beaten man to his last abode. The victor Sordello meets this procession, and invoking all blessings of the woodlands on the resting-place of Eglamor, and bidding his fame continue, he takes the crown from his own brow and lays it on the dead poet's breast:

> "Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell.
> A plant they have yielding a three-leaved bell
> Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails
> Till evening: evening gives it to her gales
> To clear away with such forgotten things
> As are an eyesore to the morn: this brings
> Him to their mind, and bears his very name."

Sordello now receives an invitation to Mantua, where he is assured the public long for his arrival, being eager for some more of the wonderful Goito poetry. And now it seems to him that his vocation is clear. By this gift of song he is as far exalted above ordinary men and women as he formerly found himself exalted above his companions the birds and flowers. He now has surely found a means of giving his own nature expression, and of compelling men to recognise him as their superior. For while others—kings, warriors, priests, statesmen, lovers—had each some real function of his own, and was confined to it, Sordello as an artist, having himself no function, comprehends the natures and lives and interests of all, and can declare their secrets in his verse. Will they not acknowledge his greatness? Shall he not obtain evidence of that greatness in this homage of theirs? With such thoughts he comes to Mantua.

But the city life agrees ill with Sordello's inner nature. After all, it was not poetry he cared for, but the self-display, the recognition by others, and the con-

sequent recognition by himself, of the powers of his nature, which he had obtained by means of poetry. He finds the labour of writing verse troublesome, and is even content to plagiarise the rhymes of Eglamor. The men and women of his first poems are simple embodiments of virtue or vice, of manly strength or womanly tenderness and grace; slight studies of character, as Sordello himself cannot but be aware. Yet they please the public; he is courted, complimented, and fêted as the last distinguished poet, and soon he finds himself shamefully hankering for praise, and enjoying the petty pleasures of real life, in violation of that design according to which he was to have comprehended the pleasures and pains of all kinds of men, but not have yielded himself to the restricting influence of any. He rouses himself to attempt some poetical work of a higher order than he has yet accomplished. But the difficulties which arise from an unformed language, and the inadequacy of any language to present in the analysis of words what should be perceived whole and unbroken, throw him back, and he returns to the old style of writing, and is content with the old praise, and the consciousness of a greatness in him which is not yet recognised.

But when he investigates the nature of the applause which he obtained as poet, is the result gratifying? He had supposed that when he represented king, warrior, statesman, priest, lover, in his verses, it would be believed that the poet was superior to them all, because he comprehended in imagination their several characters and functions. He finds that the real wonder with the

Mantuans is how "a mere singer" could have these great people—such as Montfort, whose deeds he sang of —completely, so to speak, at his fingers' ends; while the full tide of praise swept past him to those who were the subject of his song. Upon this discovery his heart turns angrily on his Mantuan critics. Why care what such as they thought of him? Had he not been fooling himself when he imagined they were competent hearers of his poems, just as he had fooled himself when he made companions out of flowers and trees? Was it not his own fancy which made them wise and brilliant and witty and judicious? Let them praise or blame, as they choose. Only with this conclusion came the consequence that he must needs fail to gain by means of them the self-display he needed.

And now the nature of Sordello is sundered in two, and at war with itself, so that his true personality vanishes. There is Sordello the man, hungry for every paltry pleasure of the moment, and unwilling that one moment's toil should lose its immediate reward, its quick return of praise or gratification; and there is Sordello the poet, despising the man and thwarting him and postponing all present delight in prospect of a time when his infinite demands on life should be satisfied. "But the complete Sordello, man and bard, . . . was gone." While questioning with himself whether he should devote himself utterly to his art, denying himself every present pleasure, or wholly renounce his art, and mix as a man with men, the Mantuans—people of distinction—would break in upon him: what could he do but fall in with the dull conventions of the day, ex-

pected from such a poet as he? His very talk becomes a sorrow to the heart; insincere because talk is required of him, and he must speak in a language not his own. Were he in solitude he could give to any question which arose a meditative answer, such as became a thinker and a poet:

> "but alas!
> One of God's large ones [*i.e.* answers] tardy to condense
> Itself into a period."

While the Mantuan talkers have opinions of the pattern-kind, cut and dry, and expect a give-and-take conversation from Sordello:

> "The end was, he retailed
> Some ready-made opinion, put to use
> This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce
> Gestures and tones, at any folly caught
> Serving to finish with; . . .
> . . . . . His soul,
> Unequal to the compassing a whole,
> Saw in the tenth part less and less to strive
> About."

So fares the man Sordello. As a poet he falls from his ideal because his hearers are incapable of being interested in the poetry—philosophical studies of character—which his artistic tendency urges him to produce. His daily work now is only not to sink beneath his rivals. And working merely for momentary applause, any of the small critics or genius-hunters of Mantua can twist him round his thumb; whom yet Sordello despises, and with whose views he is ready to fall in, if only to get rid of the intruder. Yet his conformity with these petty views is seldom perfect:

> "He would miss
> Some point, brought into contact with them ere
> Assured in what small segment of the sphere
> Of his existence they attended him;
> Whence blunders—falsehoods rectify—a grim
> List, slur it over!"

Meanwhile Adelaide dies at Goito; and Ecelin succeeds in procuring the betrothal of the sister of Azzo and the sister of Count Richard to his own two sons; and promises Palma to the Count himself. Weary of the world, sick and old, he thus hopes to conclude the strife of Ghibellin and Guelf, and retires to end his days in a monastery. His comrade, Taurello Salinguerra, is thunderstruck by the intelligence of Adelaide's death and of these doings of Ecelin, and rides with hot haste from Naples to Vicenza, to expostulate with the chieftain. But expostulation is useless. Ecelin is tired with the struggle for power; he would close his life at peace with the Holy Father; and he buys off any further remonstrances of Taurello by offering him Palma, who is still at Goito, as a lure, by which to obtain influence over Richard.

Taurello is about to visit Mantua to recover breath. His arrival is to be celebrated by games and songs and dances. Sordello is called upon to prepare an ode. Caring not whether verses come or keep away, he wanders into the country:

> "Dumb
> Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,
> On a blind hill-top; down the gorge he went,
> Yielding himself up as to an embrace.
> The moon came out; like features of a face
> A querulous fraternity of pines,
> Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines

Also came out, made gradually up
The picture; 'twas Goito's mountain-cup
And castle. He had dropped through one defile
He never dared explore, the Chief ere while
Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapped
Him wholly. 'Twas Apollo now they lapped,
Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant
To wear his soul away in discontent,
Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and brain
Swelled; he expanded to himself again.

. . . . . .
. . Come home Sordello! Soon
Was he low muttering, beneath the moon,
Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore,——
Since from the purpose, he maintained before,
Only resulted wailing and hot tears."

He explores the castle, torch in hand, and finds that Palma had left it that very day. He wanders through the well-known chambers, and rests at last beneath a marble font supported by the figures of marble girls, beside whom he used to rest when a boy. He muses; the instruments at his command for acting out his will had been proved unfit; the men and women, through whose recognition of his power he hoped to obtain a sense of its existence, have been proved by his Mantuan experience no fitter. Was *the will itself* in fault?

"His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf
Beside the youngest marble maid awhile;
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,
'I shall be king again!' as he withdrew
The envied scarf; into the font he threw
His crown.
Next day no poet! 'Wherefore?' asked
Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs, masked
As devils, ended; 'Don't a song come next?'
The master of the pageant looked perplext,
Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief,
'His Highness knew what poets were: in brief,

> Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right
> To peevishness, caprice? or call it spite,
> One must receive their nature in its length
> And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength!'
> ——So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,
> The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,
> Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,
> And nodded that the bull-bait should begin."*

Sordello has come home to Goito, the shelter of his boyhood. Here in the quietude of the valley and its hills he yields himself to repose, and almost comes to possess his soul and is almost happy. The Mantuan life, its worldliness and restlessness, its factitious modes of feeling, its loves and hatreds not his own, fade out of him, and he wastes "a sweet and solitary year" in passive self-surrender to the mild spirit of the place, living from one day to another upon the unfailing charities of nature. Yet this repose was not undisturbed; beneath it all lay a dim consciousness of failure and of imbecility which nothing could keep down.

> "He slept but was aware he slept,
> So frustrated: as who brain-sick made pact
> Erst with the overhanging cataract
> To deafen him, yet still distinguished slow
> His own blood's measured clicking at his brow."

One day in the declining autumn, every spark of the life at Mantua by this time trodden out, he is sauntering home in a mood which accords well with that of the season. The Mincio he finds has suddenly overflowed its bounds and submerged the adjacent marsh. Next morning the sight of the broad expanse of gleaming

* It has been observed that "Sordello" is a companion poem of "Parcelsus." Sordello's Mantuan experiences have their counterpart in Parcelsus's life at Basil.

water sets Sordello thinking. "Here," he cries, "is nature bound by insuperable laws similar to those which bind myself." But the difference presently becomes apparent; what need nature care for a misfortune or catastrophe, *she* who has time to repair all losses! landslip or encroachment of the sea, how can it affect *her* with her magnificent resources? But a man who fails in life fails once and for ever. Sordello's mind goes back to the life which he has renounced, its high aspiration and its early promises of greatness. He has failed, but was the failure inevitable, and shall he accept it as final? Shall he remain here like a deposed immured monarch, while life the wonderful and his own chance of achieving somewhat are fleeting for ever. No; rather resolve upon something and do it before this very night! His thoughts recur to Palma, and just at this point in his reflections they are interrupted by the presence of Naddo, trouvère and distinguished genius-haunter of Mantua, who has come from Palma with surprising news. The old Ecelin has carried out his intended policy of reconciliation with the Guelfs. He has parted his wealth between his sons, who are both to wed daughters of the opposite faction, and has himself retired to a convent. Palma, who was placed in the hands of Salinguerra, had a week since been betrothed to Count Richard, Prince of Verona, and Sordello has been summoned to make their marriage song. But Guelf and Ghibellin were not to be so easily reconciled. Ecelin had tried to pacify his old adherent Salinguerra, but Salinguerra was not soothed or satisfied. Retiring to his palace in Ferrara,

and deprived of the support of his leader, which carried with it the imperial authority, he finds his power declining and the Guelfs every day making head against him. Off he goes to Padua, professing that as his presence in Ferrara was the only hindrance to permanent tranquillity, he would remain there no longer. No sooner is Salinguerra out of sight than the Guelfs burn his palaces, ravage his gardens, and for a week are drunk with joy; next week

> "their laughter sunk
> In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange way,
> Old Salinguerra back again—I say,
> Old Salinguerra in the town once more
> Uprooting, overturning, flame before,
> Blood fetlock-high beneath him"—

and again he rules Ferrara. But Azzo and Count Richard, stunned for a moment, recover quickly, and encamp with their forces beneath the walls. Salinguerra calls for a parley, and, with treacherous design, invites Richard to meet him within the city. Richard, "light-hearted as a plunging star," agrees to enter with fifty chosen friends, and, once inside the gates, Salinguerra's trap closes upon them. This Sordello, who instantly accepts the invitation brought by the trouvère, learns on his arrival at Verona—learns how Richard is a captive in Ferrara, learns also how Salinguerra had contrived that Palma should reach Verona the day after Richard had left it for the siege, so postponing the marriage, and how the Lombard League is up in arms to succour the besiegers and effect the Count's deliverance.

It is here that the story opens, and the greater part of the first three books of the poem are retrospective, bringing up the narrative to this point. We are in Verona on an autumn evening more than six hundred years ago.

> "That autumn eve was stilled:
> A last remains of sunset dimly burned
> O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned
> By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
> In one long flame of crimson; as a brand
> The woods beneath lay black."

There is a tumultuous gathering in the market-place of old and young, citizens and soldiers, to discuss the news of Richard's capture. Within his palace the twenty-four who govern Verona are deliberating; but if we glide on by council chambers and banquet-rooms and secret passages, we come to a hidden and remote recess where a man and woman are seated.

> "In the palace, each by each,
> Sordello sat and Palma: little speech
> At first in that dim closet, face with face
> (Despite the tumult in the market place),
> Exchanging quick low laughters: now would rush
> Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,
> A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise—
> But for the most part their two histories
> Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms,
> And so the night flew on with it alarms
> Till in burst one of Palma's retinue;
> 'Now, Lady!' gasped he. Then arose the two
> And leaned into Verona's air dead-still.
> A balcony lay black beneath, until
> Out mid a gush of torchlight, gray haired men
> Came on it and harangued the people."

And the carroch is hauled forth, the trumpets flourish,

and the great bell peals to let all whom it behoves know that the League is up.

Once again that night Sordello and Palma are side by side, and Palma is confessing her heart's need of Sordello. She from the first was made to serve as was Sordello to be served, and in the quiet valley of Goito her craving was for one who should give her life its law. For that unknown one she waited, and even repressed each rising faculty lest it should determine her nature to some bent which might not agree with the will of her future master and guide. That master she found in Sordello on the April morning when Richard's Court of Love was holden; and since then she has done little but dream and plan how to make him great. She tells how Adelaide the Tuscan, grown lean with plotting, died in the castle at Goito, and disclosed a secret, to which, when Palma comes, she falters, and which she cannot bring herself to reveal—

> "One wild eve that Lady died
> In her lone chamber: only I beside:
> Taurello far at Naples, and my sire
> At Padua, Ecelin away in ire
> With Alberic. She held me thus—a clutch
> To make our spirits as our bodies touch—
> And so began flinging the Past up, heaps
> Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps
> Within her soul; deeds rose along with dreams,
> Fragments of many miserable schemes.
> Secrets, more secrets, then—no not the last—
> 'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the Past.
> How . . . Ay, she told me, gathering up her face
> —All left of it—into one arch-grimace
> To die with . . . ."

Since then Palma has grown into importance, and now

seems to possess an opportunity of advancing Sordello to eminence. Ecelin, her father, has slunk away to a monastery; her brothers, Alberic and Ecelin, are about to ally themselves to the Guelfs; may not she herself, she and he whom she elects, become the leaders of the Ghibellin cause, the representatives of the Emperor, and, with Salinguerra's assistance, the masters of North Italy? She proposes to Sordello that they shall depart together, disguised, from Verona, and hasten to Ferrara, where Sordello may learn what must be done from Taurello Salinguerra's lips.

With this she leaves him, and upon the break of morning Sordello's resolution is formed. He will make her plan his own, and rise to be the master spirit of Lombardy, the leader of the Ghibellin party, the soul of its body. He had found that a soul fitted to such a body as each of us possesses is insufficient for its own delight, both in corporeal organs, and in the power by their means of incarnating its will; he had found also that it is insufficient to make men feel and recognize the supremacy of that will; he had found by the experience of his last solitary year at Goito that his will would not abdicate, and that to renounce the demands which his nature made upon life was impossible. Men had not paid him homage for understanding and representing and interpreting them as he did in his poems: he had found how unworthy of himself it was to gain enjoyment from men in the common way, by levying on them the tribute of vulgar pleasures, such as had seduced him in Mantua; finding this he had lived in solitude, and had exiled mankind from his presence; may he not now

rescind that sentence of exile? May he not now recall men and women to serve him? And has he not discovered that their proper service is very different from what he had supposed when inexperienced he first went to Mantua—that it is by no means to watch Sordello assuming their parts in poetical representation, acting in dramatic character their various lives; but, on the contrary, to be themselves made act by Sordello, to become the agents or instruments of his will, the body of which he is to be the controlling mind; which service, thanks to Palma's wisdom, he may yet secure.*

Here Mr Browning, returning from Sordello to himself, pauses to take breath. He is seated on a ruined palace-step in Venice, musing about his own life and art. Only in such works, he thinks, as those of Eglamor, in which the artist is wholly self-surrendered to his art, wholly its slave or devotee, can we identify the art and the artist, and discover the complete man in his work. The Eglamors have no life apart from their poetry, and may be said to exist by it rather than it to exist by them. But from the highest works of art, such, for instance, as Sordello might have achieved, there always escapes some indication that the

* This passage is chosen by a writer in the old *National Review* as a specimen illustrating the obscurity of Sordello. "Whoever can construe this," he wrote, "we confess ourselves altogether unable to do so. What, for instance, the parenthetic

'To be by him themselves made act,
Not watch Sordello acting each of them,'

means, we have not the most distant notion. Mr Browning might as well have said, 'To be by him her himself herself themselves made act,' for any vestige of meaning we attach to this curious mob of pronouns and verbs treading on each other's heels."

artist's proper life lay underneath them, and flowed on apart from them, some indication that the poem is but an episode in the poet's history. Such an indication will be found, perhaps, in some humorous side glance of the writer at his own work, some skit or scoff out of harmony with the rest of the piece. What is this, when truly interpreted, but a confession on the artist's part that he is separate from his work, not absorbed in it, or that he can even afford to smile at it, that his own life began before it, and will continue after; which after life, for all we can know, may never be revealed to us? Such an one is not pledged to render for us his whole life into painting or sculpture, or music or song, and if we should take his artistic performances for such a pledge, we shall find it like the promise of a sailor who lands upon our banks, pitches his tent, and begins his tale, but when the first sign of a fair wind comes, bids us a hasty good-bye and pursues his unknown, trackless voyage.

Musing thus in Venice, Mr Browning lingers to watch the girls busy in the fruit-boats, and those passing on with lilies for the chapel beside the bridge, and one who splashes barelegged in the Giudecca, and he falls to wondering which is beautiful enough to be his queen, when suddenly a sad dishevelled woman, not alive and breathing like the others, but doubtless a spirit, stands before him. In her he beholds his queen and mistress, long since acknowledged, for she is Suffering Humanity. Once he had made vast claims on behalf of all men, once he had dreamed that the whole race might be noble in soul and perfect in body; now

he has grown wiser, and only asks for men what those peasant girls yonder possess, youth, strength, and health.

> "For in this magic weather one discards
> Much old requirement."

He has discovered that life must be accepted with the evil as well as the good in it, and in a complacent mood he had been about to boast of the happiness of mankind on the evidence of these Italian girls, poor as they are, but young, and strong, and happy, when his old mistress, Suffering Humanity, appears as if mistrusting him. And it is for her that he will continue the story of Sordello.

Not a very pleasing poem certainly. But what good to us—to us stumbling through a burning desert like the Israelites of old—were a singer who would deny our wretchedness, flatter us into a deceitful self-satisfaction, and increase our ignorance by blinding our eyes to the true condition of mankind. Rather than such an one, give to us wanderers in the desert a metaphysical poet who shall write a "Sordello," though our metaphysical Moses strike the rock awkwardly enough and forego his Promised Land, as the author of "Sordello" is content to do. He may help us to find, if not the cure, at least the cause of our misery. And to help us thus is indeed what is intended in this poem. Our nature here on earth is incomplete—is in process of construction. Now, with a full-made machine we concern ourselves only about *what* it can do, not *how* it is done. But this machine of human nature is still growing gradually into shape; it is important that we, who have some

control over it in the process of construction, should make out the purpose of every valve and wheel and cog, and the poets who see something of man's nature can help us here, the best of them imparting to us their own gift of vision.

> "And therefore have I moulded, made anew
> A Man, and give him to be turned and tried,
> Be angry with, or pleased at. On your side,
> Have ye times, places, actors of your own?
> Try them upon Sordello when full grown."

What then is the purport of this story of Sordello? What but to show that those who despise our common nature because of the restrictions and limitations to which it is subject, yet cannot discard it; that when they would overleap the bounds of existence they can but flounder on with a nature, great it may be, yet undeveloped, and which cannot be developed unless—but let us not anticipate the end. Dull enough the story is, no doubt, yet it may turn out better than it looks. The picture which so shocked the Apostle John in the house of his nephew Xanthus, and which he supposed to be the Devil with his toasting-fork, was by and by discovered to be a portrait of the beloved disciple himself bearing his pastoral cross. Is it not possible that "Sordello," in like manner, may improve on further acquaintance?

Sordello and Palma have now reached the beleaguered city Ferrara, and find it between the alternate services of its Guelf and Ghibellin friends in miserable case; the corn fields outside the town trampled into ruin by the besiegers; the palaces and houses burnt, and lying in wet heaps of rubbish, or gone with the church steeples

to repair the ramparts; the thoroughfares overrun with grass, and docks, and mallows, and, most hideous of all, the tanks a crawling mass of human corruption. Salinguerra, in his palace, has just received the Prætor of the Emperor on pressing business, and is now waiting for the delegates of the League, who come to treat concerning the deliverance of Count Richard.

This palace of his in which Salinguerra sits was one of the wonders of the country, a grim building surrounded by terraced gardens of endless beauty, and foreign trees and ranges of statues (the Naples marble, alas! already crumbling) modelled after the antique sculptures which the Emperor possessed in Messina, all planned long since for the delight of Salinguerra's girlish wife, Retrude, whom he had brought from the Sicilian Court—

> "Here, left a sullen breathing-while
> Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood
> For his last fight, and wiping treacherous blood
> Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath
> Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,
> Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and stir
> Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
> At the announcement of his over-match
> To wind the day's diversion up, dispatch
> The pertinacious Gaul: while, limbs one heap,
> The slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched leap
> Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car
> Clove dizzily the solid of the war
> —Let coil about his knees for pride in him.
> We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim
> San Pietro Palace stops us."

And here Sordello stands beside the door. He had seen much and felt much in the short time since he left

Verona full of the resolution to mould the men who surrounded him, the people of North Italy, into the instruments of his will. He had seen the march of the envoys of the League, the cavalcade of the Papal Legate, and the movements of the leaders of the army. But beside these he had seen—seen perhaps plainly for the first time—the *people*—the poor, suffering, mean, undeveloped mass of men with their petty enjoyments and huge miseries. Was it these who were to be the exponents of his thoughts, the body of which he was to be the soul? Were they not too mean, too base? And yet his heart, moved by their misery, expanded to them, so that a new feeling towards them took possession of him, a new bond bound him to them, and he became indeed one with them, they one with him, as he had intended, but in quite an unexpected way. He felt an error melting in his soul, he saw for the first time that before the people could serve him he must serve them, and raise them, making their wants and their cause his own. And what was the people's cause? Why, here perhaps was the very secret of the contest between Guelf and Ghibellin, one party espousing, and one rejecting the people's cause. But whether was Pope or Emperor, since both made a like profession, the true friend of the people? Best confront Salinguerra, and solve all doubts by urging the people's claims upon him—

> "And at last
> He did confront him. Scarcely an hour past
> When forth Sordello came, older by years
> Than at his entry. Unexampled fears

> Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute
> And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,
> Into Ferrara—not the empty town
> That morning witnessed: he went up and down
> Streets whence the veil had been stripped shred by shred,
> So that, in place of huddling with their dead
> Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,
> Its folk made shift to crawl forth, sit like friends
> With any one. A woman gave him choice
> Of her two daughters, the infantile voice
> Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his throat
> Was clasped with; but an archer knew the coat—
> Its blue cross and eight lilies,—bade beware
> One dogging him in concert with the pair
> Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife."

The autumn night had set in early, the dews were heavy, and the leaguers kindled great fires while mass was celebrated at every carroch, and the people knelt around. At the Carroch of Verona Sordello approaching hears voices in dispute, and the minstrel as he passes is called to drive bad thoughts away with a song. Sordello, with an aching head, and sick heart, sings and at the close Palma, who had been sitting there in her boy's disguise, rises and leads him away.

Let us return to Salinguerra. He had received the Prætor of the Emperor, the Legate of the Pope, and Sordello, the incarnation of the people's cause; and he still sits in the dreary presence-chamber brooding among his thoughts. He had obtained that day most opportunely, a great instrument of power—Friedrich's rescript and the baldric which made him in succession to Ecelin, now turned monk, the emperor's representative in Italy. He was not thinking of this, however, but of the contrast between the minstrel Sordello and himself.

Could he but study their two lives fully! The minstrel's life spent in doing nothing, and yet he was lean, worn out, and really old; and Salinguerra's with his sixty years, his plots and cares, and yet he still seemed young, with his broad chest, and graceful head, and curling brown hair.

> "Square-faced
> No lion more; two vivid eyes enchased
> In hollows filled with many a shade and streak,
> Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek,
> Nor might the half smile reach them that deformed
> A lip supremely perfect else—unwarmed,
> Unwidened less or more."

His life had been a series of successes, turning at the last moment into failures, in which lies the secret of that faint half-smile.* And here was one more period of his life fulfilled as all the others had been. Here was the Kaiser's rescript and badge. But by its side lay Ecelin's letter refusing the assistance of his name, and compelling Salinguerra to take the thankless place of chieftain, he who loved to be a subordinate.

Yet it had not been always so with Salinguerra. Born at Ferrara, where his family divided the supreme power with the Adelardi, the whole city was to pass into his hands when he was old enough to wed Linguetta, the last child of the Adelardi. But the Guelfs surprised the palace and carried off the girl, and the magistrates having been won over to the Guelf cause, one morning when young Salinguerra sauntered out a mile or two to

* The fine image here beginning with the line

> "How his life-streams rolling arrived at last,"

has been introduced since the first edition.

hawk, Azzo rode into the city with his bride Linguetta. Salinguerra took refuge in Sicily at the Court of Heinrich VI., son of Friedrich Barbarossa. By and by one spring day the Prince of Verona (father of Count Richard, who now lies captive in the San Pietro Palace) hurried over to Azzo, to bid him for God's sake quit Ferrara, for Salinguerra had just arrived at Mantua from Sicily, and was coming down on them in hot haste. So Salinguerra settled in Ferrara with his young wife, Retrude, whom he brought from the Court of Heinrich, and for whom he laid out the gardens and planted the Moorish trees, and procured the thousand statues. How she and her new-born son perished in the fire at Vincenza we have already seen. Salinguerra, made to serve, and who had lived heretofore for the house he was to found, now fell behind Ecelin, in him sought wife and child, and in his cause forgot himself. Since that time his life had been a series of struggles on behalf of Ecelin and his family, in which he and Eceliu's wife, Adelaide, worked together, now with success, now in failure. A life contrasting strangely with Sordello's! And not the least remarkable point of contrast was that Salinguerra, merely in the way of business, as it were, acquired all noble accomplishments of the period, and so revealed the strength and graces of his spirit without an effort, whereas Sordello, whose constant aim it was to manifest his inward greatness, had with all his efforts never once succeeded.

The night is passed by Sordello in the camp with Palma at his side, while he still endeavours to probe to the centre of the Guelf and Ghibellin movements, that

he may discover which is the cause of the People. Not the Ghibellin surely, after the reception he had met from Salinguerra! But Palma proves to him that Guelfs care certainly as little for the people as do Ghibellins. Sordello is driven forward to a new hope. Can there be, he thinks, a *third* cause distinct from both,—the People's cause ordained for him to discover? And just at this point of his reflections, when the gray of dawn is beginning to appear, a watcher in the camp strolls up to them to suggest to Sordello the subject of a ballad. "Does he know the story of Crescentius Nomentanus? No. Then let him hear it now." And it is related to him how about the close of the tenth century the Consul Crescentius found a cause in the freedom of Rome, how he endeavoured to shake off the Saxon yoke, and was the Brutus of the republic. Rome! Rome!—not the Emperor,—not the Pope,—but Rome of the Pandects, of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo,—here surely was the true cause of the people. Let Rome be built up again!

When day comes, Sordello wanders through Ferrara examining the material—his People—out of which Rome was to be constructed. Alas, it is a day of disasters. Is it these dastardly rogues, these brawlers, these filthy fellows, these shameless profligates, who are to be the senators and consuls of his city? The vision of Rome which he had built up in his imagination at dawn drops arch by arch. Could it be created suddenly that very day, ages must elapse before such as these could understand its use or glory. The hopes and fears and thoughts of men must dwell for centuries beneath

meaner structures—structures more appropriate to them than the Rome which he had conceived.

But here a low voice whispers in his heart—"Wake, Sordello! God has given two sights to a man—one of the race's whole achievement, the result of ages; the other of what each of us may accomplish in the hand's-breadth of his life. This is the hardest word ever on the lips of Fate,—that the race outstrips the individual, and that we must see what we can never attain." But this is only the essential limitation imposed upon our manhood. Our duty is still clear—to take the step we can, paltry though it seems, carrying mankind with us one step towards the goal we may not hope to reach. *Life is short, but art is long.* Every ideal workman has that sentence pronounced upon him, yet must he not, therefore, desist from effort. What is this which Sordello has been desiring? To reorganize society, to supply the people with a central mind and soul? Why, that was precisely what Charlemagne, making strength by virtue of its mere strength the governing principle of Society, had endeavoured to effect; and by his endeavour had advanced mankind a little. That was what Hildebrand, making knowledge with strength for its servant the governing principle, had also endeavoured to effect, and by his endeavour had advanced mankind a little farther.* May not Sordello, superseding the use of strength by knowledge obeyed for its own sake, take the next step? No; the world is not yet ready for that. Hildebrand's doctrine for the reorganization of society

* Note the wonderful description of Hildebrand, pp. 403, 404 (ed. 1863).

still holds the field; whoever would help mankind must endeavour to realize Hildebrand's theory. Here, indeed, Sordello has reached the centre of the confused world of thought which had occupied him since he left Verona. If he would help mankind he must change sides in politics; a Guelf he must be. It is true he can do miserably little; yet may not he be the man to whom in this age fate offers all the opportunities she possesses? Since talking is his trade, let him go and convert Salinguerra.

Sordello loses no time in taking his first step as a Guelf, and is soon standing calmly in Salinguerra's presence, while Palma sits beside the chief. "Your spokesman," says Salinguerra to Palma, "is the archer's son, Elcorte's happy sprout? Few such have diversified my sober Councils."

> "Elcorte's son! good! forward as you may,
> Our Lady's minstrel with so much to say!"

The hesitating evening sunlight floats back, and flushes the chamber, showing in outline the solid figure of Salinguerra, and caressing the form of Palma. Sordello has a chance remaining in spite of all.

And he begins that great speech which is to bind Salinguerra to the Guelf cause, the effect of which consummate rhetoric, falling as it did a little flat in consequence of Sordello's manifest self-consciousness, was that good-humoured Salinguerra left off playing with the emperor's rescript to scrutinise this extraordinary minstrel. "So poetry," says Salinguerra, "makes young hair fade sooner than politics."

And Sordello, growing more earnest from the very

perception that through the fancies in which he frittered away his youth, through the growth of fatal self-consciousness, he had lost all earnestness, seeing the ignominious years of dreaming, poetry-making, and the receiving of wretched praise, stretch out before him should he fail in this real action, begins again contending for the cause of the Pope and of the People. Salinguerra courteously assenting to all, turns to Palma with a smile: "To have heard all this sung at Mantua would have been more amusing than their forlorn bull-baits—that's indisputable." Salinguerra's contempt stings to activity all that is in Sordello; for once in the wonder that the poet's rhyme could so much disguise his royalty among men, he forgets himself, and pours forth all his soul without knowing that he is saying or doing anything remarkable. And while he asserts the poet's rank and right, the room seems to expand, and he seems to see the people crowding round with prayers and good wishes for their spokesman—

> "While he rung
> The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,
> The sad walls of the presence-chamber died
> Into the distance, or embowering vied
> With far-away Goito's vine-frontier;
> And crowds of faces (only keeping clear
> The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground
> To fight their battle from) deep clustered round
> Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,
> Kind prayers for him no vapour, since, come death,
> Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,
> Each bone new-marrowed as whom Gods anoint
> Though mortal to their rescue."

And now he bases the poet's right and rank upon their proper ground, recognising true dignity in service to

mankind, whether as Epoist, Dramatist, or Analyst; and now he ends with one more attempt to sway the will of Salinguerra to the Guelf cause, which is the people's cause. Then Salinguerra, looking at the eyes of Palma grown bright as she listened to the minstrel, knows that she loves him. And he begins to speak to her quietly of the position of their affairs. Here is Ecelin's letter declaring that he had done with ambition and the world, which meant to Salinguerra that he himself had wasted thirty years in serving a man who threw away what had been gained for him. And there is the Emperor's rescript and the badge. What does he care for it? An obscure place suits him best. Some young leader is needed to make a figure before the world; he is himself old and born to be a liegeman. If only Palma could wear the baldric; or no, might not someone else wear it for her? And in sudden sport, which a rapid flash of thought changes to earnest, he has thrown the badge across Sordello's neck.

> "On which ensued a strange
> And solemn visitation; there came change
> O'er every one of them; each looked on each;
> Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.
> And when the giddiness sank and the haze
> Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,
> Sordello with the baldric on, his sire
> Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire
> Momently; and, interpreting the thrill
> Nigh at its ebb, Palma was found there still
> Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed
> A year ago when dying on her breast."

And while father and son, Salinguerra and Sordello, listen, Palma repeats the confession of Adelaide—how on

the night of the attack in Vincenza, when the Ghibellin quarters were set on fire, contrasting Salinguerra with her own husband, she had seen, as in a vision, Salinguerra's child, new born of the young wife Retrude, becoming the future leader, and disinheriting or supplanting her own infant Ecelin; and how, with a hastily-formed resolution, she bore away Retrude and her child to the obscure retreat of Goito, where, on the evening of their arrival, Retrude quietly died, and where Adelaide brought up Salinguerra's son under the name of Sordello, concealing his parentage lest Salinguerra should feel he had an interest of his own apart from her husband's cause.

Let the reader turn to Mr Browning's poem, and learn how Salinguerra and Sordello acquit themselves in the first passionate moments after this disclosure. When these are past the mind of the chieftain hurries forward into a thousand military plans, possible and impossible, by which he is to secure a great future for his child, and which he pours out impetuously as they hurry through his mind. Palma feels she must check this violence of emotion and withdraw Salinguerra from the new-found son:—

> "She without awe,
> Took off his iron arms from, one by one,
> Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and that done
> Made him avert his visage and relieve
> Sordello (you might see his corselet heave
> The while), who, loose, rose, tried to speak, then sank:
> They left him in the chamber. All was blank."

Palma leads away Salinguerra, endeavouring to calm his excitement with a song of Sordello's, and as they reach

a long dimly-lighted stone corridor below the presence chamber, she goes on to tell him, while he listens, "sucking in each phrase as if an angel spoke," how the whole world loved his child. There was a seat in the narrow passage, where a grating showed the gold of the sinking sun, and here

> "The foolish praise
> Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made
> Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,
> A crown, an aureole; there must she remain
> (Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain
> As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)
> To get the best look at, in fittest niche
> Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow."

Whereupon he begins again pouring forth schemes, schemes with a vengeance, "not one fit to be told that foolish boy." And rising he paces the passage,

> "hands clenched, head erect,
> Pursuing his discourse. A grand unchecked
> Monotony made out from his quick talk
> And the recurring noises of his walk."

Thus with great uniform paces which you were forced to count, he crashed full armed from darkness into the stream of fiery light, and then into darkness again, turning on his heel, while, as he repassed, you caught some snatch of talk about Friedrich, or Azzo, or Ecelin. Nor does he cease till at the height of an imaginary success won for Sordello, a sound overhead fills him with groundless anxiety, and he shrinks to Palma "with large involuntary asking eyes," beseeching her to interpret it. Assuring him it is but Sordello's footstep, she takes his damp hand in hers, and leads him from the

corridor. Then the passion seems to have reached its point of relapse, and he begins to feel how failure may be possible.

> "Out they two reeled dizzily.
> 'Visconti's strong at Milan,' resumed he
> In the old somewhat insignificant way
> (Was Palma wont years afterwards to say),
> As though the spirit's flight sustained thus far,
> Dropped at that very instant."

Meanwhile the evening slowly fell; star after star came out; and gazing at the one spot still left unshrouded by the night, a pale piece of sky, and the sky-like water which lay bright below it, Sordello sat and felt how man shrinks to nothingness when compared with the symbols of immensity in nature. But turning towards the city he rouses himself and shakes off this deceptive feeling. And at last the great truth he needed rose within his mind and lighted up every turn of his life—the truth that the requirement of his nature all along was some controlling outside influence superior to himself, a soul above his soul, some power to which he should have yielded homage, and which would have made Love a taskmaster over him, a taskmaster constraining him to bow to service however humble, however subject to those limitations of our manhood which he had scorned. But living beneath the sway of no grand external influence, his life had lost all purpose, all passion, and had become the idle plaything of circumstances. His strength had been dissipated, his sensitiveness wasted, his moral nature enfeebled. Beauty, Fame, Revenge, Love, Knowledge—the influence of each of these made weaker souls than

his grow strong, and gave them some function of their own. But he, living in a real world of accident, and an imaginary world of impossible ideals, had become nothing, had done nothing, nor had anything to do. Not indeed that one of the vulgar aims of life would have satisfied Sordello. But had he sought it, no doubt some *Love* duly proportioned to it might have swayed his *strength*. Or what if he were to have been a law to himself? What, indeed, if all that we call external law, external influence, be only subjective tendencies projected outwards? The People and he were one now—in serving the people he was serving himself; yet to serve them he should humble himself and deny himself; he must renounce the discovery of truth after truth, and spend his lifetime in getting the people to accept the one truth which would be intelligible to them. Well, had he not found that very truth when he discovered that the Guelf was the party which deserved the popular support? Shall he not fling away the baldric which Salinguerra gave him, compel his father into allegiance to the Guelf cause, and perhaps persuade him to induce the Kaiser to renounce his claims on Italy?

Yet before he flings the badge away, let him consider. The good that he can do in this way is surely doubtful. If he assist the Guelfs, must not the Ghibellins suffer, who, after all, are much about as good and much about as bad as their antagonists? Or if Ghibellin rule be an evil, is he to undertake the destruction of every evil in the world? There is no evil without its use—nature itself destroys as well as creates, and even out of corruption

produces beauty and life. Was it not through their very misery that he came to love the people? And then to help mankind a little, is he bound to ruin himself utterly? Let every enterprising soul push on towards its own end, and mankind perhaps may follow all the sooner. Then, too, his capacities of enjoyment are so vast. Life is so wild and sweet. And is he to lose *all* that mankind may gain a *little?*

Yet others *have* renounced all this and more—sages, champions, martyrs—and have done so fearlessly. Yes; but then they had some assurance which made it easy to give up the world; he has not. What was true and right for them, may not be true and right for him. There is no abstract right after all, but each individual must obey the law of his own nature and circumstances. And reflecting thus, Sordello perceives that Right and Wrong, Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness, Virtue and Vice, Great and Small—in fine, all qualities of things may be but modes of our present limited sphere of existence; and he feels himself quite out of Time and the world, while

> "The intellectual power
> Goes sounding on a dim and perilous way."

He discovers that all these qualities are expressions of the material limitations of life—expressions suited to our various faculties; but they do not belong to the mind in itself, nor are they binding in eternity as they are in time. Now he discovers all, for he sees that the soul must stoop to the limitations of life—must, for example, recognise and yield to all the laws which affect the body. But *how* is the Soul to stoop? By brutaliz-

ing itself and blinding itself to every object except that one—beauty it may be, or fame, or knowledge, or power —which becomes its end for this life? May no soul ever see All, the great Past and Future, and the small Present, see all and yet be saved by pursuing the one path prescribed to it by Love:

> "As the king-bird with ages on his plumes
> Travels to die in his ancestral glooms."

But where shall we find that Love? Why, surely Sordello had found it when he first felt that the cause of the people was his own? All is resolved then into the question, Does he decide to save the people or no?

And here Mr Browning, several of whose earlier poems are declarations of mankind's need of God, and of God in Christ, comes forward, and speaking for Sordello, tells us that the great requirement of his nature was that of a Power above him, and beyond all possible rivalry, which he could love though he cared for none of the things which men ordinarily love, and of a Power which should represent that Supreme Power, and having equal authority yet be nearer to him; in a word, his need was that of a revelation of the Divine in the Human, of the Christ of God. And now Sordello's end is come—

> "What has Sordello found?
> Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
> End where poor Eglamor begun? as says
> Old fable, the two eagles went two ways
> About the world: where, in the midst, they met,
> Though on a shifting waste of sand, men set
> Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello found?
> For they approach—approach—that foot's rebound. . .
> Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail;
> They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil

> Aside—and you divine who sat there dead,
> Under his foot the badge: still, Palma said,
> A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,
> Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies
> Help from above in his extreme despair,
> And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there
> With short, quick passionate cry: as Palma prest
> In one great kiss her lips upon his breast
> It beat. By this, the hermit-bee has stopped
> His day's toil at Goito: the new-cropped
> Dead vine-leaf answers, now 'tis eve, he bit,
> Twirled so, and filed all day: the mansion's fit
> God counselled for. As easy guess the word
> That passed betwixt them and become the third
> To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax
> Him with one fault—so, no remembrance racks
> Of the stone maidens and the font of stone,
> He, creeping through the crevice, leaves alone.
> Alas, my friend—alas Sordello, whom
> Anon they laid within that old font-tomb—
> And yet again, alas!

Sordello's life has been a lamentable failure; yet because in that last moment he flung the imperial baldric below his feet, and aspired towards a great cause above and beyond all selfish interests, it has been a failure containing within it the promise of ultimate fulfilment in some other and higher life which is to come.

Little more remains to tell. Salinguerra's dreams once again end in failure. Once again he becomes a servant of the family of Ecelin, and, indeed, by and by, marries the youngest daughter of the house, under the pressure of a political necessity. Children are born to him, and as years go on he dwindles down to a mere showy, turbulent soldier. Finally, having quarrelled with the Venetians he is captured, fat and florid, at a

banquet in Ferrara, and, now eighty years old, is carried to Venice for a show, and allowed to stroll about the streets and squares, not much cared for by anyone but the children who know he is a magnifico. Young Ecelin meanwhile becomes the Ghibellin chief, and makes a name for himself famous in history by unexampled atrocities and tyranny.

And all are gone—Ecelin and Taurello, Adelaide, and Palma, and Sordello. Only some few verses of the once famous singer may still be heard. All are gone save Eglamor, whose spiritual face appeared among those of the ghostly listeners to this poem of Mr Browning. He, the enthusiastic worshipper at the altar of poetry, has been going up from heaven to heaven of glory, still a worshipping soul of others nobler than himself.

> "Oh, strange to see how, despite ill-reports
> Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained
> Its joyous look of love!"

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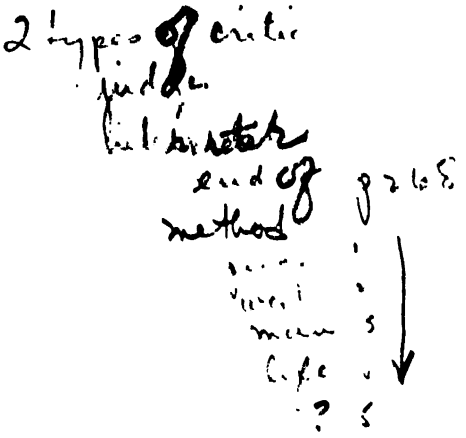

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